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Institut politologických studií

Department of International Relations

Master's Thesis

2021   **Nayan Anand**

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Department of International Relations

Jihadisation of Insurgencies: A Corollary of Civil Wars?

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Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.

3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on: Nayan Anand

20 July 2021

References

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Abstract:

Large scale destruction and surfeit chaos that accompany civil wars have provided a platform to several insurgencies operating in the setting to compete in a struggle for increased power and territorial occupation against their depraved regimes and each other. It is during this power struggle that several insurgencies make a jump from a purely nationalistic agenda of the civil war to a larger religious goal by complying with jihadist organisations thriving in the region. Although the topic of civil war and religious radicalisation has been on the international agenda as well as the academic community for many years now, proselytizing and hijacking of national agenda of insurgencies by religious extremists is also of growing concern. Thus, this research will seek to find if jihadisation of insurgencies is a direct consequence of civil wars by using the Afghanistan and the Syrian Civil wars as case studies. The approach adopted here is to dwell into the factors behind the adoption of jihadist ideologies by insurgencies in war zones. These factors would then be applied to both the case studies. The paper will incorporate insights from previous qualitative studies conducted on geo-referenced terror, the role of religion, and ideologies in civil wars in the aforementioned countries to arrive at the conclusion.

Keywords:

Acknowledgment:

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AQI - Al-Qaeda in Iraq

ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

ISIL – Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

JAN – Jabhat al-Nusra

IEA – Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence

FATA – Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas

HiG – Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin

HIA – Hizb-i-Islami

FSA – Free Syrian Army

SNC – Syrian National Council

SSG – Syrian Salvation Government

HTS – Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham

SRF – Syrian Revolution Front

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A. Introduction

1.1 Significance of the Topic

*"Civil Wars Create Ungoverned Spaces where Extremists and Terrorist Groups
can Organize, Operate, and Spread"*
– Kenneth Pollack

The notion of civil wars has a complicated history attached to it. The presence of mindless violence and disorder alongside the incessant political, economic and social effects, most often than not prepare the countries for their ruin. With countries like Syria, Libya, Yemen and many others widely affected by these wars to date, it is no wonder that this topic has dominated the resources and public domain of discussions not only in the affected countries, but also abroad. The series of anti-government protests against oppressive regimes that the Arab Spring brought in the early 2010s, further motivated a string of clashes between the rebel insurgents and the authoritarian governments in the region. While the initial attempts of the Arab Spring faded pretty quickly, it was renewed with a new vigour towards the end of the same year, a phenomena leading to the Syrian Civil War, Libyan Civil War, the Egyptian crisis, Yemeni Crisis & Coup and of course the influx of ISIS in the region following the Iraqi insurgency. To this day, many of these conflicts are raging on a larger scale, which is now referred to as the Arab Winter.

While problems against autocratic states leading to civil wars are a prominent phenomenon seen in the Middle East, these wars have however successfully gravitated towards the neighbouring regions through the years. A similar course can be easily identified in Asia as well where several examples of national insurgencies leading the civil wars can be underlined. Following a turbulent history consisting of two preceding civil wars, the country of Afghanistan is one such example; the country is not a novice to the course of destruction that civil wars incorporate, while the same can be said about the Syrian Civil War which is still raging on for more than a decade in the Asian subcontinent. Such extensive conflicts emerging from insurgencies also still pose the biggest security challenges to the African mainland with exhaustive civil strife in Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and the DRC to name a few, while countries such as Libya and Chad are still dealing with the aftermaths of recent termination of civil wars on their lands (the Libyan Civil War terminated in 2020 while the

Chadian Civil War officially ended in 2010 but the country still heavily deals with armed conflicts formed as a result of fights between local insurgent groups formerly involved in the civil war). Fewer agreed negotiations and agreements between the fighting parties and even lesser implementation of these signed settlements has often resulted in the prolonging of these civil wars much more than inter-state wars (Walter, 2009).

Amidst the large scale destruction and surfeit chaos that accompany civil wars, it is however, often seen that nationalist insurgency movements are characterised by Jihadists ideologies through the course of the war (Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2018). *"Despite the state's continuing conventional superiority—in terms of power and status—over non-state actors, the critical combination of extremist ideologies and dispersed organizational structures gives groups many comparative advantages in their confrontation with states."*[1]

By December 2015 alone as per a report by the Centre on Religion and Geopolitics (UK), total of 60% of the insurgency groups in Syria had turned towards Islamists ideologies, mostly that of Salafi Jihad[2], while a similar trend was noticed in both Somalia and Afghanistan. Extreme radical organisations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Jabhat-al-Nusra, Taliban, Al-Qaeda and many others have recruited several fighters from these wars, funded the local insurgency movement externally, and ultimately hijacked the ideological structure of these insurgency groups fighting in these regions; cases that were seen to be true for the Free Syrian Army, Jaysh Rijaal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia, the Haqqani Network and many others worldwide. *"Fewer than a quarter of the rebels surveyed were not ideological, and many were willing to fight alongside extremists and would probably accept an Islamist political settlement to the civil war."*[3]

Although the topic of civil war and religious radicalisation has been on the international agenda as well as the academic community for many years now, proselytizing and hijacking of national agenda of insurgencies by religious extremists is also of growing concern. And while states within the international system are making a conscious effort to understand the root causes behind civil wars and growing insurgencies within such a setting, the scope of mechanisms pushing national insurgencies to adopt jihadist ideology remain under-researched. It remains to be largely understood why rebel insurgencies fighting in civil wars

[1] Stepanova, E. (2008). Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects. SIPRI Research Report No. 23. *Oxford University Press*.
[2] Peralta, E. (2015, December 20). 60 Percent Syrian Rebels are Islamists Extremists, Think-Tank Finds. *NPR*.
[3] Ibid.

shift from a national to a transnational agenda; where earlier the goal was to take over the state, the goals have now widely shifted to creating a unified worldwide organisation under one leader (Walter, 2017). What is interesting to note here is that most often than not, the goals of these rebel factions were not as extreme as the ones highlighted by the jihadist ideologies. This raises an interesting question: Why despite the ideological gap do these rebel insurgent factions adopt such extremist religious ideologies?

While many researchers are of the opinion that embracing of radical ideologies such as Salafi Jihadism or Wahhabism, is often merely a strategic and pragmatic decision on the part of the rebel insurgent groups fighting in these civil wars with the sole purpose of being on the winning side of the insurgency, *"so long as they can have a credible guarantee that the winner will not strip them of power once victory is accomplished"*[4]; alternatively, some other scholars suggest that this trend arrives from the wider picture of racial and religious atrocities faced by Muslims around the world, hence hijacking the nationalist aspect and working as a launching site to wage the 'greater war' for religion.

There is definitely no dearth of research done that talk about the political, social and economic effects of civil wars and the role of ideologies within the war settings at the national level. *"In the decades preceding the 1990s, the emphasis of both academic and policy-making communities was largely on the realm of interstate war, while instances of ethnic war and civil conflict were usually interpreted through the prism of bipolar rivalry."*[5] Now, in the year 2021, while significant research in this field is still carried on, the focus has largely shifted to understanding the factors of onset and termination of these wars rather than the ideological transitions of actors within the conflict. While western media is still covering snippets of the ongoing civil wars in Syria and Mali to name a few, there is still more that can be achieved from the academic sphere, especially in the space of the adoption of a religious ideology in the domain of a national conflict. However, the new decade has brought many acclaimed writers in the field of security studies who have put forward their research and are changing the way of discourse around this topic. My aim with this thesis is to add on to the ongoing work and discussions in this field.

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[4] Christia, F. (2012). Alliance Formation in Civil Wars. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139149426

[5] Souleimanov, E.A. (2013). Understanding Ethnopolitical Conflict: Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia Wars Reconsidered (Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies), (1st ed. 2013 ed.). *Palgrave Macmillan*.

Hence, using a heavily sourced country specific literature, this thesis would aim to identify and review the causal mechanisms through which insurgencies in civil wars become jihadised. In other words, this thesis will see how civil war insurgencies formerly fighting in the nationalised armed conflict, adopt a religious agenda overtime.

1.2 Research Target and Question

While the first civil war, *'Fitnah'*, that rocked the Muslim world in 656 – 661 CE, showcased instances of huge internal struggles that resulted in an internal drift between the Shia and Sunni Muslims, one of the greatest religious schism of all times; it is only in contemporary civil war settings, especially since the war in Lebanon in 2003, that there can be seen a definitive increase in the adoption of external religious ideology by rebel groups within civil war insurgencies. However, despite a growing number of literature and research available for the role that ideology plays in civil wars, the topic of how civil war insurgencies become religiously ideologized, is still lacking on a larger scale. Furthermore, even the available knowledge on the prevention of radicalisation and counter-radicalisation techniques often employed by authorities in such situations would not bear fruit until and unless it is known the mechanisms and the factors that lead civil wars to pave the way for future jihadisation of that part of insurgencies.

The research question of this thesis is hence, **"How do some antecedent civil wars pave the way for future ideological jihadisation of the part of insurgency?"** Using the aforementioned research question, I will further try to explore and establish the mechanisms that aid civil wars to adopt jihadist ideology and turn into a larger, much greater, war for religion, taking the case of Afghanistan and Syria. These mechanisms will further be supported by a heavy regionalized discourse from previously conducted research for both the cases, ultimately aiming to answer the research problem posed by this thesis which is *'What factors/mechanisms able the subsequent jihadisation of armed insurgency conflicts in civil war settings?'* For clear reasons, the scope of the paper will only be limited to cases where at least one of the involved actors in the civil wars are of Islamic origin, since post 2003, 65% of civil wars fought are in countries where Islam makes the main religion (Walter, 2017). It is expected that the completion of this thesis would aid to fill the current research gap in this field and further contribute to our understanding of existing literature on civil wars as well as

of insurgencies that are a part of it, by offering an au fait literature review on the mechanisms through which insurgencies in civil wars get jihadised.

1.3 Methodology (Empirical Data and Analytical Technique)

This research aims to highlight the micro-level analysis of the **factors of adoption of religious doctrines/ideologies in civil wars** in these two regions and thus does not make use of a quantitative approach to assimilate this information together. Moreover, despite the differences in the language spoken in the regions and the several different actors involved in these wars, the underlying causes of civil wars and cultural similarity shared by these regions provide a good start for theorizing a qualitative analysis.

For the purpose of this research, a broad spectrum of sources, both primary and secondary, will be considered, though the main focus will be on the secondary sources. The central aspiration of this research is to add on the existing theoretical literature about civil wars and armed insurgency conflicts, and hence this thesis will mainly look into academic papers and journals that provide concrete qualitative knowledge about this subject. Though there are a lot of available sources on the role of ideology in civil war settings, for this research, only those sources will be considered that would shed some light on how armed insurgencies get religiously ideologized, focusing mainly on the mechanisms that lead to such a change. While most available sources do not directly help us answer the proposed research question for this thesis, they assist in identifying possible mechanisms for it and help build up a strong literature review.

In a way, the research methodology for this thesis is cognate to that of a comparative case study with its primary objective being to test the same mechanisms across the two countries. The rationale behind focusing on the civil wars waging in these two particular geographical locations is mentioned in the next part. The following section will also deal with how and why the sources were structured.

The paper will incorporate insights from previous qualitative studies conducted on geo-referenced terror and civil wars particularly in the aforementioned countries to arrive at the

conclusion. The approach adopted here will be to first establish through a well-researched literature review the mechanisms through which insurgencies in civil war settings embrace jihadi beliefs. Using these mechanisms as a common lead, a thoroughly localised and regionalised section on Afghanistan and Syria will complement the research to ultimately answer the research question.

(a) Case Selection

Having seen ethnic civil wars continuing on their territories since the early 1990s to the present, both countries that will be considered here, Afghanistan and Syria, have been witness to some form of jihadization, leading to at least partial territorial occupation of these regions. In addition to sharing religious and cultural comparability, with Sunni Islam being the main religion in both Afghanistan and Syria, these war torn countries also share geographical proximity. Being severely impacted by years of conflicts following a rise in number of nationalist insurgencies, both the regions share the same burden of societal grievances, fuelled with economic and political struggles. The lack of a stable government also forms a common political environment in both the countries while the shared religious identity has resulted in the civil war taking a similar course of action in both Afghanistan and Syria in terms of jihad; forming fertile grounds for religious radicalisation efforts to take over national agendas. The Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and its later support for a budding Taliban, and ISIS in Syria have heavily influenced the course of the wars in their individual countries and have dictated the shift in agenda of the insurgencies part-taking in these civil war (from over throwing the government to that of waging a greater religious war). It goes without a doubt that these cases also fit perfectly within the limitations of this research where we are only looking for civil war cases where at least one side of the involved insurgency groups are of Islamic origin.

Although, in the case of Afghanistan, the US government and the Taliban have as of February 29, 2020 signed a peace agreement under which the Taliban has agreed to not undertake terrorist activities in the area under its control and push for a reduction in violent activities, the agreement seems not to have stopped the Taliban from carrying out attacks on Afghan lands. While the talks for the ceasefire were still underway from February 2020, a UN report found that *"July was the deadliest month in Afghanistan in the last couple of*

years, with 1,500 civilians killed or wounded."[6] Thus, even though the official civil war in Afghanistan has reached an end as of 1996 and an Afghani government has been formed and working in name since 2004, there still remains an environment of uncertainty and continuous prospects of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan incited by the Taliban along with its organisational ally, the Al-Qaeda. Thus, we could easily point out that the aftermaths of the third Afghanistan Civil War can still be felt in the region. It is this fact that we consider within the scope of this thesis. On the other hand, the Syrian Civil War completed a decade of its origin with no visible end to it in sight in the near future.

Another reason for the selection of these two regions can also be attributed to the fact that while there is an abundance of literature and research available on the civil wars of Afghanistan and Syria over the years, the focus is not entirely given to research on whether civil war settings are paving the way for jihadisation of the insurgencies in these areas, and hence to further jihadisation of these areas as a whole. As for the case of Afghanistan, despite the availability of several resources reporting about the civil war conditions there, a thorough research on the conditions that paved the way for the spillover effect of Al-Qaeda's (and other smaller terrorist organisations) influence into the Afghani civil war is not widely available. This research would hence aim to fill this research gap.

(b) Sources

In order to map this research and support it with well profound research, I will make use of secondary qualitative data and sources. These sources will be used to provide a theoretical framework for this thesis, gather a deeper understanding of civil war settings, complement the heavily cited literature review as well as support the mechanisms that I will list here, with earlier research. For this purpose, several governmental and private internet websites will be made use of to collect these sources, specifically, academia.edu, Google Scholar, researchgate.com and pez.cuni.cz (Charles University Prague's portal of electronic academic sources). These sources will mainly be used to find acclaimed and peer-reviewed research papers, journals, official government reports and publications, e-books, media reports and other academic material on the mechanisms through which armed insurgencies adopt jihadist ideologies to in turn answer our research question. The bibliography page of academic content found using these websites will further be used to come across more sources. In

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[6] Abed, F., Faizi, F. and Mashal, M. (2019, August 7). Violence in Afghanistan Worsens as U.S.-Taliban Peace Talks Plod On. *The New York Times*.

particular, research papers providing information on geo-referenced civil wars in Afghanistan and Syria will be most important to this research.

In order to maintain the integrity of this research, only acclaimed and published research papers will be considered, most of them which are peer-reviewed, so as to eliminate the risk of trudging on wrong information and research.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This paper is divided into three parts; the pre-empirical part, the theoretical framework and the empirical part containing the two case studies. The pre-empirical part consists of the introductory chapter which is further divided into 4 parts. The first part introduces the topic and its relevance in the current academic scenario in the realm of security studies. Subsequently, the second part consists of the research question followed by the methodology that will be used within this research paper where a sub-section on the case selection and the sources used are provided.

The theoretical framework consists as the second part of this thesis. Here, existing literature pertaining to the topic and definitions of key terms repeatedly used in this thesis will be discussed. A chapter on the mechanisms/factors that lead insurgencies in civil wars to imbibe jihadi ideologies will also be discussed and noted down. The mechanisms will be listed down in no particular order of significance. These common factors will then later be applied individually to our two case studies that form the empirical part of this thesis.

The empirical part will consist of two case studies; Afghanistan and Syria. The approach to both cases will remain the same – first a brief overview about the beginning of radical reforms in both countries will be presented. This will be followed by a section where the mechanisms/factors listed in the previous part (theoretical framework) will be applied to the two cases, making this thesis regionally and politically relevant. Each case study will then be summarised to wrap up the loose ends.

B. Theoretical Framework

Based on the current research available in the realm of social sciences, the concepts of religious ideology, terrorism and jihad in academic literature have been defined numerous times by several authors, government authorities, NGOs, international institutions and the like. Hence, there are a number of ways in which these terms can be defined within the scope of this research. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I will not be dwelling or elaborating on this debate, owing to the limitations of this research. The core concepts that this research will be dealing with are those of terrorism, jihad and insurgency under civil war settings in order to provide a sound theoretical backing. By taking the concept of insurgency and ideological jihad in civil war settings, this research will thus determine the causal inferences by "a systematic comparison of situations in which the presumed causal factor(s) is present" (Maxwell, 2004) in both Afghanistan and Syria. Research by Barbara Walter, Kristin M. Bakke, and Stathis N. Kalyvas would be studied specifically since they are authors of acclaimed and peer-reviewed research papers dealing with the concepts important to this thesis.

1.1 Definitions

In this section, important concepts that will be used further in this research are defined. These concepts have been explained through the course of academic research by several academicians and security organisations, although these definitions seem to be both converging and diverging in some parts. With the addition of new socio-political agendas and material objectives post the 9/11 world, often wrongly inter-changeable concepts such as terrorism, insurgency and jihad have ceased to be defined as mere sole attacks carried out by religiously motivated groups through violent or non-violent means as a way to put forth a group's message; but are now more complex terms to understand, influenced by several factors and categorised into different typologies in the field of security studies.

Terrorism

It is imperative to note here that the concept of terrorism greatly differs from that of armed conflict. Acts of terrorism can still be conducted where there is an absence of an armed conflict, while terrorism can be used as a tactic within ongoing armed conflicts as well

(Stepanova, 2008). Following the divergence in how the term is explained, this paper will include the definition of terrorism through the lens of a few academicians and institutions, while ultimately attempting to formulate its own definition to complement this paper.

Barbara F. Walter and Andrew H. Kydd in their paper titled 'The Strategies of Terrorism' (2006) define terrorism *"as the use of violence against civilians by nonstate actors to attain political goals"*[7]. Talking about the five main socio-political goals of terrorists, namely *"regime change, territorial change, policy change, social control, and status quo maintenance"*, the duo talk about how terrorist activities are merely a tactic to achieve these goals by distraught nonstate actors. Resonating a similar idea but in the context of civil wars specifically, Stathis N. Kalyvas defines terrorism as *"resorting to violence in order to achieve compliance"*.[8] Stressing on the fact that this definition provides two uniquely distinct yet overlapping functions, "elimination and deterrence", Kalyvas also highlights the fact that this definition differs from its everyday usage and meaning, however maintains the same logic as in a quotidian sense while the UN General Assembly defines terrorism more descriptively as:

"Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them."

Surprisingly, this description of terrorism leaves some space for doubt regarding the role of insurgents and their alleged cause of protection of the said general public from corrupt states. Given the fact that insurgents fighting within these civil wars have their source of rising from within the general public, I define terrorism in my own words for the purpose of this paper as: Acts of violence committed by actors, both state and non-state, with or without being indoctrinated with religious extremist ideologies, with a reason to cause harm and damage to people and property as a result of political, religious, social and even materialistic qualms.

Jihad

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[7] Kydd, A., & Walter, B. (2006). The Strategies of Terrorism. Quarterly Journal: International Security vol. 31. no. 1. (Summer 2006), 49-80. *Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*.

[8] Kalyvas, S. (2004). The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War. The Journal of Ethics, 8(1), 97-138. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25115783

The true meaning of the word Jihad under Sunni Islamic doctrine comes from the Arabic word, *Jahada*, which means struggle where jihad refers to either the struggle for the religion against any evil while aiming to spread the true beliefs of Allah (lesser jihad), or the struggle within oneself (greater jihad). However, in the contemporary world and owing to the Western jargon, the term jihad is now often used to depict a secular or religious extremist war. While the religious texts of Islam pay heavy attention to the concept of *Salam* or peace, the use of punishment and/or violence is also allowed within specific instances, an important instance being to subdue the enemies of the faith. It is this concept that is now heavily being used in the modern and grander sense of jihad as we know it. Jihad in its current sense can further be broadly divided into two categories; global and classical jihad. While global jihad *"aims to deter western interreference in Muslim countries"*[9] through armed conflicts, classic jihad refers to establishing the orthodox Caliphate and regaining the historic integrity of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This paper deals with several insurgent groups in Afghanistan and Syria that have later adopted Salafi-Jihadist ideologies however, it is not restricted in scope to Salafi Jihadism alone since the paper also talks about insurgent turned terrorist groups such as the Taliban that do not follow such a doctrine, but instead follow the Deobandi School of Thought, an ultraconservative branch of Wahhabism. Hence, a more general understanding of jihad is put to use in this thesis.

Insurgency

The term insurgency is defined by the US Homeland Security as:

> *"Simply a description of the nature of the conflict"* where it *"is a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations."*[10]

From the perspective of civil wars, this definition is useful in identifying anti-state groups that work cohesively to topple national governments due to personal, social and economic

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[9] Nesser, P. (2011). Ideologies of Jihad in Europe, Terrorism and Political Violence. 23:2, pp: 173-200. DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2010.537587

[10] Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency. (2012). *United States, Central Intelligence Agency*.

grievances that may involve both violent and non-violent subversive tactics to fulfil their goals. The main aim of the insurgent groups thus remains to *"engage the government in long, costly wars of attrition to destroy or undermine the government's will."*[11]

1.2 Literature Review

Once peaceful regions, the conflict-ridden countries of Afghanistan and Syria have now been witnesses to at least a decade of waging civil wars on its territory. While the civil wars started as a consequential step of region wide insurgency on the part of local communities and tribes, what is interesting to note is the subsequent jihadisation of this part of insurgency. A number of factors, most importantly the influx of foreign fighters and external funds along with the growing tolerance towards an extremist ideological structure in these civil wars changed the rules of the game, eventually leading a nationalised war to become a façade for a much bigger struggle for jihadisation of insurgencies in these conflicts and the region as a whole.

The subsequent involvement of extremist religious ideologies in these civil wars raises an important albeit relatively unexplored question, how did insurgencies under civil war settings that started as nationalist revolutions against inconstant regimes inculcate religious ideologies overtime? In other words, how did insurgencies whose initial aim was to overthrow the ruling government and establish an alternative authority, accommodate religious indoctrination through the course of the war?

The following section would aim to list down as part of the literature review, important factors that lead to jihadisation of insurgencies acting within civil wars. The subsequent sections would then use these factors in individual case studies of Afghanistan and Syria to ultimately answer the research question: "How do some antecedent civil wars pave the way for future ideological jihadisation of the part of insurgency?".

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[11] Jones, S. & Johnston, P. (2013). The Future of Insurgency. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 36, Issue 1, pp: 1-25. DOI: 10.1080/1057610X.2013.739077

1.3 Mechanisms/Factors leading to Jihadisation of Civil War Insurgencies

Based on our literature review, we are able to narrow down the following possible factors that lead to religious indoctrination or the adoption of jihadist ideology within insurgencies in civil wars.

(a) Hijacking of regional politics and insurgent ideas by foreign actors through the use of monetary aid

An important reason that leads to nationalist insurgencies in civil wars to inculcate jihadist ideology can be attributed to foreign dollars and international intervention. As Billions of dollars enter these war torn areas, the added 'resource curse' provides an incentive to insurgent groups to fight longer than would be the case without foreign aid. *"In fact, in the modern world there are few groups that have employed terrorist tactics that rely on domestic resources and means alone. Groups engaged in armed conflicts in very remote locations who relied primarily on internal resources still build ideological links with like-minded movements and obtained some financial or logistical support from abroad."* (Stepanova, 2008). As the paper 'Why Jihadist Insurgencies Persist' explains, when a rebel insurgency group has *"access to an external source of revenue, it no longer relies on its population for support and can therefore be more undisciplined in its violence"* and in its adoption of radical ideologies. These foreign interventions then in turn also establish possible opportunities and situations for current insurgency groups to flourish and even form a local authority backed up with formal institution like authority and revenues (Ahmad, 2018), a case in point being the US intervention in Afghanistan where the USA with its definite aim to throw away Soviet influence on the area, supplied guns and large sums of money to the Afghani mujahideen, ultimately giving rise to the Taliban. In the same case, even Saudi Arabia along with Pakistan, and Iran invested large sums of money in the region to fund their own factions of insurgencies intended as their puppets in the Afghanistan Civil War, representing the Sunni and Shi'ite religious ideologies (more will be spoken in depth in the following chapters with proper citations from academic papers).

The political power play within the international system also has a huge role to play where owning to differences in opinions on governance and other socio-political issues, it remains in the interest of the funding international actor(s) to keep willingly pump money and hand

resources to insurgency groups *"in exchange for their alliance"[12]* and to sustain their own political goals. A classic example of this can be witnessed in the massive funding provided to Taliban in its initial years by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan to keep the Afghan politician Hekmatyar at bay since he had different ideas than Pakistan on the future of Afghanistan after the Soviet disposal (Dressler, 2010). However, as a result of unstable government and a corrupt political system, *"the international community has repeatedly found itself working with poorly behaved local partners who have a stake in continued instability, while jihadists use this embarrassing fact to present themselves as the better and more stable political alternative"[13]*, thus shifting insurgencies now armed with big bucks, towards their religious agendas and ideologies.

The funding of madrassas in conflict areas is another way through which foreign aid from both state and jihadi organisations abroad put insurgency on the path of religious indoctrination through education. Madrasas are places of formally unregulated primary education mainly imparting Islamic teachings to students at a highly reduced or no fees. Hence, these institutions are frequented by students hailing from poor or religiously fundamentalist families who cannot afford formal education especially in nations fighting civil wars on their soils, often making these students *"susceptible to romantic notions of sectarian and international jihads"*.[14] According to a speech in 2016 by US Senator Chris Murphy, as many as 24,000 madrasas[15] known to fan radical religious ideologies and anti-western narratives in Pakistan were directly funded by Saudi Arabia's foreign aid, where he urged the USA to intervene and stop "Saudi sponsorship of radical Islamism". These madrasas in turn are credited with following an *"extremist and Jahadi curriculum"*[16] from where most students then shift to terror training camps and find direct affiliations with organisations such as the Al-Qaeda along the porous Afghanistan-Pakistan borders (US Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, 2007).

Flooding the conflict area with immediate foreign dollars, jihadist groups from nearby areas also involve similar tactics of making available easy money and resources for the various

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[12] Ahmad, A. (2018). Why Jihadist Insurgency Persist. *OpenCanada*, Centre for International Governance Innovation.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military. (2002). *International Crisis Group*, ICG Asia Report No. 36.
[15] Chris Murphy on the Roots of Radical Extremism. (2016). CFR Editors. *Council on Foreign Relations.*
[16] Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. USA House Hearing, 110 Congress. (2007). Extremist Madrassas, Ghost Schools, and U.S. Aid to Pakistan: Are We Making the Grade on 9/11 Commission Report Card? *US Government Printing Office*. Serial No. 110-17.

insurgency groups. As a result, these groups are incentivised to get a bigger share of the fund and fluidly rebalance their power dynamics in support of these jihadist groups, hence imbibing their religious ideologies in the process. There are however, some scholars such as Azam and Delacroix (2005) who insist that it is not actually foreign aid that directly pushes insurgencies in conflicts towards other religious ideologies, but it is in fact the allocation of funds to areas already facing an extremist situation that leads to such a result.

(b) Jihadi Foreign Fighters

While the Soviet-Afghan war (1979 – 1989) had made use of the first recorded number of foreign fighters, 20.000 plus (Farivar, 2014), the ongoing Syrian civil war continues to battle both along and against different factions of foreign fighters with more than 30.000 of them engaged in the conflict over the last decade (UN News, 2016 February 09). In an ideological sense, foreign fighters and political entrepreneurs are often credited with presenting the ground facts of the wars to the insurgency factions in such a way that creates an emotional shock for them as well as the population at large (Costalli and Ruggeri, 2015). In a bid to recover from that shock, a population that was not ideologized before, turns for answers and protection to an 'alternative view', which in such cases happen to be an extremist religious ideology provided by the foreign fighters and external troops. These fighters bring with them an extremist interpretation of Islam, for example as seen in Chechnya where the earlier population used to follow the Sufi strain of Islam, but was later introduced to Wahhabism by foreign fighters in the 1990s (Bakke, 2014). While for the Sufis, jihad is only interpreted as the correction of oneself, the Wahhabi doctrine echoes the need for the spread of true Islam for the creation of an Islamic State. Hence in this way, the influx of foreign fighters changed the entire course of religion in the Chechen area, along with the ones followed by the insurgent groups.

Playing on the aggravated mass level grievances, these foreign fighters, well trained and experienced in wars, arm the rebel insurgency groups with both ideology and money to reach their goal, ultimately shifting the focus of the war from a nationalised problem to a greater religious lesson for the 'kafirs', *"detaching individuals from the previous status quo"* (Costalli and Ruggeri, 2015). Since their families are not usually present at the battlefield,

foreign fighters have *"little to gain from peace solutions and often remain opposed to them"*[17] by supplying more modern weaponry and effective tactics of fighting to the insurgency groups, not to mention heavily funding them (Malet, 2013). A typical example of this can be seen in the incident where rebels of the Free Syrian Army, an insurgency group fighting in the Syrian Civil war, decided to join the better-funded, more successful and influential ISIS operating in the same region, ultimately giving way for religious ideology to take over their group (McCants, 2014). Similarly, the Haqqani insurgency network operating in Afghanistan has welcomed large scale influx of foreign fighters in its ranks, giving way to a more extremist jihadist ideology where *"these groups have come to rely on the network to build their own international jihadist credentials"*.[18]

As Bakke reiterates the point in her paper titled 'Help Wanted? The Mixed Record of Foreign Fighters in Domestic Insurgencies', joining the bandwagon of who is to blame for all the chaos, foreign fighters join with insurgencies to further create a larger narrative of us vs them while inspiring and "legitimising collective action" (Bakke, 2014). The insurgents on their part mould foreign norms to suit local requirements, hence building a sense of resonance, trust and commonality with the foreign fighters. As a result, it becomes easier to manipulate these groups to slowly inculcate broader ideas and ideologies brought by these distant fighters. Using the inability of the state to cater after its people as an excuse, foreign fighters portray it as a part of a larger problem that of the oppressions of Muslims worldwide.

Some academicians such as Mendelsohn (2011) and Bakke (2014) are also of the opinion that the key factor in the acceptance of foreign fighters by the local population and insurgency also heavily relies on cultural similarities and social norms. Foreign fighters from nearby lands are often welcomed by local insurgencies due to their ethnic alikeness and similar goals of serving the *ummah* (community), thereby strengthening their cause and capabilities, a clear case of which can be noticed in the second Afghan Civil War where Pakistani *talibs* (students) were trained to fight alongside the ethically similar Afghans in a bid to establish a homegrown insurgent group, the Taliban, as the 'sole protector' of true Muslim values in Afghanistan.

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[17] Souleimanov, E. A. (2018). Religion and Civil War: The Cases involving Salafi Groups. Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Politics and Religion. *Oxford: Oxford University Press*.

[18] Dressler, J. (2010). The Haqqani Network: From Pakistan to Afghanistan. *Institute for the Study of War*.

(c) Religiosity goes up during wars leading to the ideological shift, often with the help of the clergy

In the case of Afghanistan as with Egypt, Algeria and Iraq, the tribal nature of the society and dependence on religion as a source for law, order and guidance often gives more powers to the Muslim clergy or *ulamas* in the area. Though there are several factions of insurgencies active within one civil war, most of these groups are contingent on their religious leaders for spiritual and moral guidance. As a result, these clergies enjoy both power to shape the course of the war, along with having information regarding insurgency groups and their needs where *"through involvement in their daily lives, the mullas greatly influence the people"* (Nawid, 1997) since they are *"largely free of government control"* (Nawid, 1997). It is also argued that pushing jihadist ideologies and agendas provides religious elites the chance to gain full political control over the masses as an alternate to state structure (Napoleoni, 2003). Key religious leaders such as Mullah Mohammad Omar of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman also called the Blind Sheikh from Egypt, and Abdullah Yusuf Azzam known as the Father of Global Jihad among many others have all through the course of turmoil in their countries, heavily preached these jihadi ideologies to the vast population as Muslim clergies and practiced it themselves.

In their paper titled 'Violence With a Conscience: Religiosity and Moral Certainty as Predictors of Support for Violent Warfare' (2011), Shaw, Quezada and Zárate mention that insurgencies often spiral towards religious extremist teachings during war since *"religion allows people to feel certain about their own moral principles. Feelings of moral certainty, in turn, satisfy a person's need to feel moral and alleviate concerns about the moral consequences of violent warfare."* Since, religion forms the first point of contact for people to differentiate between right and wrong as a community, the common understanding during wars, as preached by the clergy and felt by the population, often helps them to justify adopting jihadist or other religious extremist ideologies as a way to achieve what they think is right for the believers of the faith. In settings of deprivation of stability and other materialistic things during ongoing civil wars, people with a higher level of religiosity were found to be more in support of using means of political violence to get their message across to the adversaries where *"at the instigation of the clergy, jihad became the pre-eminent political issue"* (Nawid, 1997).

On the other hand, some other scholars are of the opinion that the inculcation of extremist religious ideologies such as Salafi Jihadism within the insurgency movement is caused by the polarisation of the views of the public towards extremist ideologies over time. Rising sympathies within the community for the atrocities done against their 'own people' at the hands of other religions or quite often even other ethnic sects, mirrors a similar picture of horror and despair that they witness in these civil war zones. This influences them to adopt jihadist ideologies and assimilate their conflict as part of a bigger struggle for the Muslim community, effectively shifting the narrative of the conflict from a nationalist to a religious war. According to Burchill and Paul (2015), the justification of the jihadisation of insurgencies is a natural next step in the transformation of a localised movement to global appealing ideas grounded in the universal faith of Islam where in the exact words of Robert Jay Lifton, *"God's warriors would destroy the world to save it."*

Another explanation for this transition of insurgencies from a nationalised to a religiously motivated approach is explained by Aisha Ahmad in her paper titled 'Why Jihadist Insurgencies persist' in which she emphasizes that rebel insurgency factions finalize on the adoption of such religious ideology because of the fact that the other local allies are often clueless and directionless about the ways to achieve their aims within a civil war conflict, in which case this religious ideology acts as the guiding path to the enduring struggles against adversaries. Agreeing with this point, Ekaterina Stepanova in her paper titled 'Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects' says that in such cases then religious extremism serves an ideological basis for regionalised insurgency groups involved in armed conflicts to gravitate towards the much larger and violent Islamist movement.

Religion and extremist religious ideologies such as jihad are also used as a Unique Selling Point (USP) by jihadist groups to attract local insurgencies towards them. In a war setting which is laced with ethnic or religious issues, insurgency groups compete with each other for the little resources available. In a bid to find funding, they try to present themselves as the most Islamic to help them differ from others like them. This *"desire to present oneself as the most committed representative of a group, therefore, could spark a race to the ideological extreme, leading to a proliferation of ever more radical organizations"* (Walter, 2017).

(d) Weak governments enable localised insurgencies to spiral towards extremist ideologies because of large scale personal grievances and potential environment for its adoption

The capacity of insurgencies to take on state governments on a large scale in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Algeria among many other countries, with the support from external extremist groups has called the attention of scholars to study the relation between tyrannical and unstable 'democratic' governments and the role of insurgencies in waging violence in retaliation to it. As a result, state capacity to address grievances of its public, provide socio-economic security and rights is often studied in connection to the rising insurgency factions laced with jihadist ideologies in these countries within civil war settings.

Some scholars are of the opinion that insurgent factions and people victimised in civil wars at large look for only long term solutions to the perpetual instability and chaos that civil wars bring, a reason that helps them gravitate towards a strong religious ideology that has the potential to help their cause. They thus look for alternatives to switch the weak institutional structure of the regional government with a much stronger and customized administration where they can have a say in. In such situations, it is in the best interest of these rebel factions and the common people that an authority is established which responds to the demands and grievances of the public, in order to avoid a recurrence of civil war like situations in the future.

Supporting this alternate view of long term gains, as Findley and Young (2011) note, David Lake's work in 'Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty First Century', explores how external jihadi organisations enter conflict areas at a later stage to mobilise the rebel factions and use their ideology *"to provoke the target into a disproportionate response, radicalize moderates, and build support for its ambitious goals over the long term"* (Lake, 2002). This only confirms that jihadisation of insurgencies during civil wars occur when jihadi outfits find the complete absence of state institutions, including religious ones, ultimately tilting the masses in their favour. This view was reiterated by a document 'National Military Strategy' published by the Afghanistan government which said that the insurgency groups were more vulnerable to turn towards extremist religious ideology when there seemed no hope or scope of achieving basic facilities from the state institutions, hence forcing them to look for alternative sources such as religious ideologies (Jones, 2008). As an

established case, the ISIS in Syria mimics as a complete state with hierarchical state structures, levying and collection of taxes, fulfilment of social procedures such as marriage and birth of future soldiers of the state and most importantly the provision of security to its followers from the other *kafirs*, as can also be seen in the case of Mozambique, Lebanon and Sudan. Thus, this seems like a plausible explanation as to why extremist ideologies such as Salafi Jihadism may appeal to the masses at large, ultimately leading to the jihadisation of the insurgency in civil wars.

According to bargaining theorists then, civil wars are likely to occur in countries where the weak governments remain unable to successfully negotiate with its challengers (Walter, 2017). In the paper 'Bargaining Failures and Civil War' (Walter, 2009) it is mentioned that a reason behind this may be that even though governments make promises to deliver effectively to its population, the divided outlook presented by the several factions of insurgencies in the area provides little liability costs to the governments in case it goes back on its promise. As a result, there is a never ending cycle of negotiations and re-negotiations between the parties which ultimately lead insurgencies to shift towards jihadist groups as a new companion.

It was also found out that under such war settings, other novice states that have experienced authoritarian regimes in the past and have a current destabilised state government structure fall easy prey to the spillover effects of religious indoctrination from its neighbouring countries dealing with armed conflicts, a fact that was witnessed to be true in the case of Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This in turn leads to a prolonging of civil wars laced with religious overtones, now with added heat from a region wide chaos (Walter, 2017, 2002, 2004).

While as established earlier that religiosity goes up during wars and push people to embrace religious indoctrination, the moderates who believe in state structures and effective functioning of the government also seem to flock towards jihadist organisation since they portray an image of commitment to a cause and welfare for the followers of its religion, a kind of stability that they no longer can expect from its government and its leaders, as Barbara Walter (2017) explains in her paper titled 'The New New Civil War'. Fearing the return to a chaotic life after "fair" elections from their leaders, the faith of the local moderates and initially less religiously fanatic rebel insurgencies then shifts to an ideology which is

extremely determined and focused in its commitment, one that is provided by the jihadist ideology.

(e) Indigenised issues in conflict areas force insurgencies to seek and adopt radical ideologies because of the specific and befitting content of their doctrines – definite gains both long and short term

The role of jihadist ideology in indoctrinating insurgencies in civil wars is a slightly complex variable to understand owning to the conflicting views regarding this in academia. Some scholars point out that the adoption of jihadi ideology by the rebels in civil war setting is merely a strategic decision taken by those involved to win the war rather than it being a medium to attain religious supremacy. Due to the presence of several insurgent groups working in the same region with diverging approaches to the war and its end goals, there is often witnessed in-group fighting among these groups which diminishes their focus to stand united against the adversary/ies. Extremist ideology here then works as a sympathising and binding tool to bring about the different rebel factions involved in the civil war together, the pull factor solely being to stand united against a common enemy while *"helping to connect often fragmented, informally linked elements and enabling them to act as one movement."*[19]

Reconfirming this point, Boukhars (2018) also opines that the adoption of a jihadi ideology as part of the insurgency is a very pragmatic and rationalist choice in civil wars insurgencies; the core assumption being that the adoption of an extremist ideology in wars provides a critical competitive advantage in attracting the most revolutionary fighters that can outcompete rival insurgency groups and shape the dynamics and outcomes of these wars; *"Average citizens may have incentives to join or collaborate with an extremist group if they feel that such a group is more likely to win a war and resist corrupting influences once in power"* (Walter, 2017). In such cases, the main reason that rebel factions in insurgencies adopt a religious ideology then becomes a strategic discourse on the part of the insurgents even if they don't believe in the underlying principles of such an ideology where *"the more battles a group wins, the more attractive it becomes"* (Walter, 2017).

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[19] Stepanova, E. (2008). Terrorism in Asymmetrical Conflict: Ideological and Structural Aspects. SIPRI Research Report No. 23. *Oxford University Press*.

These jihadi ideology also appeals to the moderates in such precarious times since they have the potential of being able to shift and shape the socio-political relation of the conflict area in the favour of the masses. It is common knowledge that in uncertain times such as in civil war settings, people seek immediate and short-term benefits rather than think about the long term consequence of partnering with jihadist groups, a view supported by Thaler (2013); *"Well-endowed groups with access to extractive resources or foreign sponsorship attract opportunistic recruits interested in short-term material gain."* There further seems to appear no need for the common people to imbibe the religious regulations that forms the foundation of such ideology in its entirety. In fact it is not rare to see tweaks and softening of this ideology to accommodate the scenario present in the civil wars. This provides the local insurgents with more incentives to jihadise their agenda since it is flexible in its adoption, but with definite gains. The people simply then *"understand jihadi groups such as ISIS as revolutionary actors that happen to be religious."[20]*

Complementing the research on the acceptance of external jihadi organisations by insurgencies for the purpose of long-term gains, Kenneth Pollack and Barbara Walter in their well acclaimed research paper titled 'Escaping the Civil War Trap in the Middle East' (2015), highlights the contagion effect that civil wars create. They talk about how the adverse effects of one civil war in terms of insurgency and terrorism, most often than not, crosses borders to other countries with similar situations of chaos, weak institutional governance and widespread grievances of the public, and gives way to the analogous rise of rebel insurgency groups in the new country since civil wars form the breeding ground for rising insurgencies and a welcoming site for jihadist organisations from neighbouring areas. Giving the example of Syria and Afghanistan to support this point, the paper states that

"It is no accident that many of the worst terrorist groups on the planet were born or incubated in civil wars: the PLO, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Tamil Tigers, Lashkar-e Taiba, al-Qaeda, and now ISIS. In the 1980s, al-Qaeda and their constituent groups could not make a dent in Saudi Arabia or Egypt, so they fled to Afghanistan where they thrived within its civil war. They then set up franchises wherever civil wars existed in the Muslim world, such as al-Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula, al- Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and al-Qaeda in Iraq (which became the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS)." (ibid., p. 31)

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[20] Boukhars, A. (2018). The Paradox of Modern Jihadi Insurgencies: The Case of Sahel and Maghreb. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*.

To justify their violent actions, external jihadist groups often engage in creating a perfect persona of the past life in all its glory and emphasis the need to re-establish the same social orders to escape the ghosts of the present, in front of the people torn down by the civil wars waging in their homeland. In such cases, the jihadi ideology mobilises people to adopt its beliefs for a definitive promise of compensation in the 'afterlife' in addition to the short and long term benefits of this affiliation. Eager to embrace martyrdom and self-sacrifice as soldiers, the individuals involved in the insurgency adopt the jihadist ideology since it allows them to dehumanise their enemy, rendering it into a diabolical object that requires annihilation (Juergensmeyer, 2008). In addition, it provides an illusion of justice to the people, thereby relieving them of guilt for the violence they cause as part of the insurgency. This leads to the lines between religion and politics to blur, where anyone and everyone becomes an important actor, fighting for his personal gains while simultaneously doing a service to the community. As Barbara Walters puts it in her research (2017), the advantage of adopting a religious extremist ideology instead of a non-religious one for insurgents fighting within a civil war is that in place of readiness to sacrifice oneself for the community and the religion on the whole, the ideology provides them with either cheap rewards of a good 'afterlife' or punish them severely for their non-corporation, effects of which they have to deal with in this life itself. Due to this, people prefer supporting such religious ideologies in the present for the fear of being punished and tortured in this life.

C. Empirical Section: Case Studies of Afghanistan and Syria

Having established these key factors that lead to the adoption of religious ideology by insurgency groups within civil war setting, this research will now apply these factors to our two case studies of Afghanistan and Syria.

1. Afghanistan

1.1 Beginning of Radical Reforms in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has a continued and long history of civil wars fought on its soil. While its ancient history is marked with a yearlong civil war waging from 1928 – 1929 over ethnic disputes, the modern history has also born witness to three wars on its land; it is these civil

wars, especially the second and third one marking the advent of the Taliban in modern history that will be in focus in this research.

Being a country that consists of people from different ethnicities, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Durrani and Gurjars to name just a few, Afghanistan has seen several divergences in the demands and desired outcomes for the country by these various tribes through the years. Lacking a unified national identity, a stable overall governmental control and limited resources available at disposal, these tribes have eventually given rise to varied insurgency groups that not only fight against the state, but also simultaneously engage in war against each other for more control over the region. *"Motivated by greed and profitable opportunities"* (Jones, 2008), these competing insurgencies eventually found themselves attracted to the idea of global jihad, preached by organisations such as the Al-Qaeda and the ISIS in neighbouring countries. With heavy funding from such organisations and now a unified common goal, first anti-Soviet and then later pro-Islamic, these insurgencies have readily made the ideological shift over the years, shifting the narrative of the civil wars from a nationalised agenda to a religious war for power.

The first civil war of Afghanistan was fought from 1989 – 1992 in a period of chaos following the expulsion of the Soviets from Afghanistan the same year in February. After the Soviet's departure as a main opposing force in the previous Afghan War, an interim communist government of President Mohammad Najibullah was set up amidst large scale objections from various mujahideen insurgency groups such as the Haqqani Network, the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin led by Hekmatyar, the Jamiat-e Islami and the Ittehad-e Islam that had sprung up during the Afghan War in 1988. Supported by the Pakistani ISI, these mujahideen groups colligated together in the Battle of Jalalabad in 1989 and after repeated domestic attacks, forced the government of Najibullah to retire in 1992. Afghanistan was now an open field of competition among the several present insurgency groups to form the new government, although Hekmatyar and his insurgency group, Hezb-i-Islami, were leading the charts. However, in 1992, most of the Afghani insurgency and political parties agreed to a power sharing structure under the Peshawar Accord signed on April 24, 1992.

The second civil war fought from 1992 - 1996 saw the Taliban as a new Islamic insurgency group which was rising in power in Afghanistan, ultimately becoming the head of the informal state with the creation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) in 1996. While

the other present insurgency groups often formed and broke coalitions among themselves, starting in 1994, the Taliban had emerged as the strongest of the lot with heavy support from both ISI and Pakistan's government. After gaining territory starting from Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad and finally Kabul, the Taliban emerged victorious; although five mujahideen insurgency factions, namely Jamiat-e-Islami, Hezb-e-Wahdat, Ittehad-e-Islami, Hezb-e-Islami and Harakat-i-islami led by Burhanuddin Rabbani from the Jamiat-e-Islami insurgency as the President, formed a coalition interim government in Kabul, now at war with the Taliban for control of Afghanistan.

The third Afghan civil war was a continuation of the long period of destruction and political imbalance that ensued in Kabul, fought from 1996 - 2001. A period marked by repeated international intervention from the US and UK to manage the large-scale crisis, the third war witnessed the Taliban grow exponentially with the support from powerful allies such as the Al-Qaeda, and great many massacres at the hands of the Taliban. The war reached a termination after the US and UK launched a joint attack to finish the Al-Qaeda sponsored Taliban in Afghanistan post the infamous 9/11 attacks. Ever since then, formally the civil war in Afghanistan has reached its termination but in reality, the country is still dealing with the extreme aftermaths of the three wars, not to forget that the various factions of insurgents are still largely active in the country where *"the fighting, which began in 2002, had developed into a full-blown insurgency by 2006 where the number of insurgent-initiated attacks rose by 400%"*.[21] Though there is now a 'democratically elected' government in Afghanistan, the Taliban still enjoys a lot of influence in the region where it has forced a stringent interpretation of the Sharia laws on the public in areas under its control. Simultaneously, the Taliban also engages in repeated attacks against both civilians and government forces alike to establish itself as the leading formal organisation in Afghanistan. Other insurgency groups such as the Haqqani Network, Hezb-i-Islami, Sazman-i-Nasr, Shura-Inqilabi-i-Itifaq-i-Islami, Jamiat-i-Islami, Harakat-i-Islami to name a few are still omnipresent in the Afghani insurgency scene (see Map 1 in Appendix).

Taking the example of the biggest insurgency turned terrorist organisation still prevalent in Afghanistan, the Taliban, which evidently was earlier *"used as a pawn during the heyday of the Cold War and later by mindless Islamic fanatics"[22]*, the insurgency has adopted and is

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[21] Jones, S. (2008). The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad. *International Security, 32*(4), 7-40.

[22] Misra, A. (2002). The Taliban, Radical Islam and Afghanistan. *Third World Quarterly*, *23*(3), 577–589.

executing its own extremist ideology (the Deobandi School of Thought). While on the surface the group seems to be fighting a rather nationalist and to a greater extent a cultural war, one to protect the country from diverging external Western influences and guiding the people on the path of scriptural Sharia, what the Taliban is really creating is *"a society of its own liking"*[23] based on its adopted fanatic doctrines. A similar strain of thought can be followed in the case of Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), an insurgency group directed by the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood which later shifted its ideologies to mirror that of the Al-Qaeda after receiving *"funds from Saudi charity organizations, Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda leader, Osama Bin Laden"*.[24]

Afghanistan's shared territory with troubled Pakistan, post-Soviet occupation trauma, ethnic differences and a weak government together made the country susceptible to fall at the hands of the insurgency there. Deepening their involvement with other jihadist groups, these insurgencies now pose huge security threats not only to Afghanistan, but to the whole region as well. Backing on the spillover effects of jihadisation from neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Tajikistan, the use of jihadist ideology has pushed forward the agendas of these insurgency groups that count on mass local grievances and frustration of the local communities to support their ideological shift. It is thus in the interest of this research to understand why civil war insurgencies in Afghanistan, especially from 1992 to the present, adopted jihadist ideologies through the course of the wars using the five factors that we listed in our Literature Review above.

1.2 Factors

    (a) Hijacking of regional politics and insurgent ideas by foreign actors through the use of monetary aid

Afghanistan was the front line battlefield of the USA and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. While the Soviets had successfully invaded the country and established their bases, also helping in setting up an interim Communist government on its withdrawal, the USA provided *"arms, supplies, and diplomatic support to an Afghan war of national liberation, channelling an estimated $2 to $3 Billion of aid"* (Rupert, 1989) to the several insurgencies active during

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[23] Ibid.
[24] *Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)*. (2008). *Institute for the Study of War*.

the Soviet-Afghan war, a pattern that the USA followed well into the civil wars with the assistance from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Under the Reagan Doctrine formed in 1985 to fight communism across the world, the USA heavily invested in Afghanistan, while heavy machinery and weapons were handed out to Afghani mujahedeens to fight the Soviets. According to Misra in his paper 'The Taliban, Radical Islam and Afghanistan' (2002), *"the CIA had liberally used the analogy of the lost honour of Islam before the godless Communists"*, thereby effectively waking the insurgencies into action by pushing them into adopting an extremist religious doctrine that would help get rid the country of the Soviets and protect their religion from Western influences. In truth, this use of religious propaganda was used by the USA to only fulfil their own political goals in the region. During that time, the USA also pushed for enlisting several foreign fighters from nearby Pakistan and other Islamic countries to help train these insurgency factions on warfare mechanisms. As we will see in the next point, these foreign fighters then brought along with them jihadist ideologies that were later imbibed by the insurgencies in Afghanistan.

However, after the withdrawal of the Soviets, there was no common enemy left to fight and a power gap struggle ensued between the various insurgency factions to take hold of the country, while the arms and weaponry, even the "*ground-to-air Stinger missiles, provided by the USA*"[25] remained. Even after the withdrawal of the Soviets, the USA *"did not sever strategic linkages with Afghan mujahidin"*[26], while *"aid from wealthy Arab donors, especially from individuals in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates"*[27] ensured that these insurgencies would stay afloat. As a result, in a bid to be the stronger faction, insurgencies now backed with external finances, looked for support from organisations to help them in winning their internal war, a gap profoundly filled in by jihadist organisations working in the region like the Al-Qaeda and later even the ISIS. After these groups aligned themselves with the Afghani insurgencies, there were now two wars being fought simultaneously; one by the insurgencies among themselves, and the other a much larger war for religion against the infidel West in the backdrop of a civil war rattling the country.

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[25] Kepel, G. (2003). The Origins and Development of the Jihadist Movement: From Anti-Communism to Terrorism. *Asian Affairs*, *34*(2), 91–108.
[26] Misra, A. (2002). The Taliban, Radical Islam and Afghanistan. *Third World Quarterly*, *23*(3), 577–589.
[27] Jones, S. (2008). The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency. *MIT Press Journal*, International Security, Volume 32 – Issue 4, 7 – 40.

The USA was however only one actor in this multi-player political struggle that was brewing in Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia, the Pakistani government and the ISI along with several other governments of Muslim nations such as the UAE, Egypt and Qatar also had a huge role in delivering both arms and ideology to the Afghani insurgency. Funding the madrassas where the Afghani insurgents were educated, Saudi Arabia filled the education curriculum in these madrassas with extremist Sunni ideology, revenge and a vigour to wage the greater jihad for religion on a larger scale. Another reason that motivated Saudi Arabia to invest big dollars and dictate the regional politics in Afghanistan was to carve out a political space for its Sunni ideology and ways of living post the Iranian Revolution of 1979 where the Saudi government tried influencing the insurgencies in Afghanistan who focused and *"shared their anti-Shia Wahhabi doctrines"*[28]. On its part, the ISI in Pakistan also provided a safe haven to Afghani insurgency to study in these Saudi established madrasas, later also providing safe grounds for jihadi training camps by the Al-Qaeda to train these rebel forces. While the Pakistanis counted on these now jihadi insurgencies to help them fight their war in Kashmir in return - first Hekmatyar's HiG and later due to emerging difference, the Pakistan shifted it support to the Taliban in 1996 - the result was the advent of a new religious war in Afghanistan that deferred from the earlier nationalist wars between the insurgencies.

After years of using Afghani soil to wage their own personal battles, the civil wars in Syria and other conflict zones such as Iraq and Iran have now shifted the interests of these foreign actors from Afghanistan. While Pakistan is still charged for supporting the Al-Qaeda and Taliban in Afghanistan over religious similarities and ambitions, both financially and in terms of providing sanctuary within their country in places like Quetta and in FATA, Saudi Arabia is also now driving money through oil and gas transactions with these insurgencies-turned-jihadist organisations in the region while important clergymen preaching Sunni-Wahhabi doctrine are on continual visits to Afghanistan to further spread their ideology. As for the USA, as per reports in 2021, the current President of the USA, Joe Biden, has declared the withdrawal of American soldiers from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of presence. However, amidst rising tensions between the several jihadi insurgencies united over a common enemy – the West, it remains to be seen how the future of Afghanistan will unfurl without 'direct' intervention from international actors.

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[28] Mather, D. (2003). Afghanistan: Foreign Intervention And Social Transformation. *Critique*, 31:1, 91-116,

(b) Jihadi Foreign Fighters

The Taliban presents an interesting case as an insurgency group in terms of foreign fighters later dictating their ideology. Traditionally comprising of Pashtuns, the group's name comes from the Pashto word *'talib'* which means student. Since the group encompassed Pashtuns from the Southern and Eastern areas of Afghanistan, the area bordering Pakistan also called the Durand Line, it is not a surprise that the movement picked up its pace from these *talibs* who were educated on religious extremist teachings in Pakistani Madrasas. With the insurgency's main aim to practice a strictly Islamic way of governance in Afghanistan, the *talibs* however brought back with them fellow Pakistani foreign fighters who had earlier helped them train and fund their insurgency ideas. As was established in the earlier point that the Pakistani government and the ISI along with the USA and Saudi Arabia largely helped in the formation and even later success of the Taliban, it is not a surprise that there was a large influx of foreign fighters from these countries into Afghanistan once the movement gained pace, not to forget the ethnically Tajik and Uzbek students who had joined their cause while together in the madrasas in Pakistan.

While the Afghans were earlier followers of Sufi Islam, including several of its insurgency groups, a sudden shift to Wahhabi-Salafi ideology was noticed post the infiltration of foreign fighters during the Soviet-Afghan war (William, 2011). This had large scale implications for the methods of fighting for these insurgency groups as well because "by importing their – sometimes extreme and unrelated to the locals' – beliefs and perspectives, foreign fighters affect the ideology of domestic insurgents" (Souleimanov, 2018). Now the Afghan insurgencies were not only lad with heavy machinery and weapons, but also introduced to new methods of warfare such as suicide attacks which were advocated by the foreign fighters, an idea looked down upon by the insurgencies earlier since it was against the Islamic religious principles that they so strongly held.

Following *"a long history of borderless jihadi volunteerism"*[29], the engagement of foreign fighters with insurgencies and later shifting their ideologies to a religious doctrine is not a new phenomenon that occurred with the Taliban. Tired of contesting with other local warlords and mujahideen fractions in Afghanistan, the group also sought out the support from

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[29] Michael Bonner, Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practices (Princeton; Princeton University Press. 2006), pp. 136-137 as quoted in Williams, B. G. (2011). On the Trail of the 'Lions of Islam': Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980–2010.

foreign fighters embedded with jihadist ideologies to help them fight against the different factions, confirming that *"insurgencies, initially the weaker factions in civil conflicts, attempt to strengthen their forces by obtaining outside support, including manpower and specialists"*[30]. The Al-Qaeda members in this case then *"played a key role as ideologues, propaganda specialists, financiers, front line fighters, suicide bombers, and bomb makers"*[31]. The Haqqani Network operating as a guerrilla insurgency group in Afghanistan also shared close ties with the Al-Qaeda which *"provided the network with access to a new pool of resources"*[32] while the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was also a huge contributor in the process of ideological shifts of these insurgencies during the course of the civil wars.

Sometimes the jihadi groups would also change the insurgents' ideologies by initially showing a keen support and understanding of the groups objectives. As Brain Glyn Williams writes in his paper titled 'On the Trail of the 'Lions of Islam': Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980-2010', an important foreign fighter who got his fame from the Afghanistan civil wars by making use of such a tactic was Osama bin-Laden. Starting his career as a strong force engaging against the Najibullah government, bin-Laden closely worked with the Taliban leader Mullah Omar on the establishment for jihadi training camps for the insurgency as well as the foreign fighters that had followed bin-Laden into Afghanistan. *"Bin Laden did this by pointing out the importance of spreading shariah law and jihad beyond the borders of the Islamic Amirate of Afghanistan and in essence expanding the Taliban's worldview"* (Williams, 2011). In the past decade, the foreign fighters were also able to attract insurgencies in Afghanistan to their religious extremist ideas amidst the eruption of a new and much largely covered (media) Iraqi insurgency. With the Iraqi insurgency portraying new ways of conducting warfare, *"the Arab fighters also shared the Iraqi tactic of improvising land mines and explosive devices with their Afghan Taliban comrades"* (Williams, 2011).

However, the foreign fighters were also responsible for putting their insurgent allies in deep trouble when bin-Laden and his group of foreign fighters refused to halt their operations against the West. The insurgencies on its part, now equipped with a new radical ideology and weaponry, was forced to take part in these endeavours, as a way of repaying their jihadi allies

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[30] Malet, D. (2013). Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts. *Oxford Scholarship Online*.
[31] Williams, B. G. (2011). On the Trail of the 'Lions of Islam': Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 1980–2010.
[32] Dressler, J. (2010). The Haqqani Network: From Pakistan to Afghanistan. *Institute for the Study of War*.

for the help received by them in their earlier nationalist agendas in the Afghanistan civil wars. As a result, post 9/11, even though the Taliban did not have much to do with the attack as a group, being heavily involved and trained in the same camps as bin-Laden's men, the group also faced severe backlash from the US and was hunted down by the CIA in retaliation. This further led the group to cling to the Al-Qaeda for survival, hence pushing them down further into the jihadist ideologies more than they had previously intended to, since the CIA's operation provided *"even more Western 'occupiers' for the foreign fighters to oppose"* (Borum and Fein, 2016).

(c) Religiosity goes up during wars leading to the ideological shift, often with the help of the clergy

The case of Afghanistan is no exception to how religion based ideologies and teachings work to unify a population together in the time of distress such in the case of civil wars. Be it the necessary push to encourage Afghani insurgencies to rebel against the Soviets or to propel for a strong government based on religious morals, religion and its key defenders have time and again motivated Afghani insurgencies to deviate from their purely nationalist agendas, to seek a much higher role and mission, one of universal defence of Islam from *kafirs* by adopting jihadist ideologies.

Given the long periods of war ensuing in the country and being a tribal society with a weak governmental structure, the population of Afghanistan often turned to the ulamas and clergymen of the Islamic mosque for guidance in day to day affairs. Naturally, even after the various tribes fragmented into insurgencies, the main source of teaching and guidance remained the mosques for most of them. Looking for a way to be in control of their fate amidst long lasting chaos within civil war settings, and in a dire need for a leader, a person and an ideology to follow, the insurgencies in Afghanistan turned to the mosque and as a result, *"the power of the ulama, the spiritual leaders of the masses, increased significantly and at the instigation of the clergy, jihad became the pre-eminent political issue"* (Nawid, 1997).

Speaking in the case of Afghanistan and the role that the clergy plays in radicalising insurgencies and the general public towards jihadi ideology, Reza Fazli, Casey Johnson &

Peyton Cooke in their paper for the United States Institute for Peace (2015) note that "*when religion is used by these individuals (the Muslim clergy in the region) it is highly contextualized, and an appeal to religious teachings appears to be most effective at radicalizing supporters when it advances the idea of protecting the homeland (watan) and expelling occupiers*". An example of this can be witnessed in the case of Abdullah Yusuf Azam, a Palestinian born Sunni Islamic clergy who was not only the mentor of Osama bin-Laden, but also successfully helped concentrate various Arab foreign fighters and the Afghani insurgency towards jihad against the Soviets through the use of religious sermons and pamphlets highlighting the misery that Muslims under foreign rule have to go through worldwide. In such cases, the clergy uses religious texts to and make their own interpretation of the meaning of these texts to incite the insurgencies into action.

The clergy in Afghanistan during the time of these civil wars was so inter-woven with the state, that leaders would often call on to the *ulamas* to verify and support their statements and actions. As a result, even during the period of weak governance in Afghanistan, the opinions of the clergymen were taken to be serious words of authority. Naturally, when the call to wage jihad came from these clergymen, the insurgencies did not shy away from drifting towards the religious extremist ideologies that these *ulamas* preached. Though most of these *ulamas* were not affiliated to any jihadist groups on their own, they were known to preach and recite sections of the Quran that justified the use of violence in order to protect the religion from infidels. Here, we can see how Nasir al-Fahd, a Saudi born Salafist Islamic scholar is talking about the use of weapons of mass destruction in Afghanistan by insurgencies through the use of (mis)interpretation of religious texts in the Quran.

If a Muslim group should assault life or honor and
could be repelled only by killing all its members, it would be
permissible to kill them, as scholars have mentioned in
chapters on repelling an assailant. How much more
permissible is it when it comes to an infidel assailing the faith,
life, honor, the intellect, and the homeland! [33]

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[33] Al-Fahd, N. (2010). A Treatise on the Legal Status of Using Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Infidels. *Archive.org.*

Armed with such a justification and ideology, it was just a matter of time before insurgencies found themselves gravitating towards jihadist organisations to fulfil their duty of being a protector of the faith.

In such cases then, the mosques and madrasas also became the site of active recruitments from among the insurgencies for other jihadist organisations operating in the country, in addition to arming insurgencies with a radical curriculum that was taught in these madrasas. Since the curriculum remained largely uncensored from the government, there was a number of insurgencies that found their first interaction with jihadi ideologies here. For example, in the city of Nangarhar, Herat and Balkh, *"with mullahs propagating extremist messages"* (Fazli, Johnson and Cooke, 2015), their teachings at the local mosques have said to have a large impact on not just the population of these cities, but also the neighbouring towns, to take up jihad and fight alongside similar organisations in the name of the country. As Fazli, Johnson & Cooke, 2015) note, *"Just as during the anti-Soviet jihad, these madrassas still inculcate extremist messages and encourage graduates to join extremist groups where the subset of fighters tends to be radicalized prior to joining the Taliban."*

The Taliban is also a prime example of the use of religion to arm insurgencies with jihadist ideologies. The group which was formed in a madrasa in Pakistan, later gained 'formal' teachings and trainings of jihad there through repeated interactions with Islamist operations such as the Al-Qaeda. Armed with the Deobandi ideology, an orthodox part of Wahhabism, the Taliban now worked on the principle of administering a strict interpretation of Sharia in Afghanistan, even in formal governance, while the Deobandi interpretation also made them a defender of the Islamic religion worldwide since *"Deobandis also believe they have a sacred right and obligation to wage jihad to protect the Muslims of any country"* (Johnson & Mason, 2007).

These local mullahs and other religious leaders were also known to publish several fatwas against infidels from the West and encourage insurgencies to wage jihad against them. As a result, insurgents would then seek agencies that would help them fulfil the goals of their religious leadership and consequently associate with external jihadist organisations to fulfil their roles within the community. Abu Yahya al-Libi was one such religious leader who carried out the task of jihadising Afghani insurgencies through religious fatwas. A high ranking Muslim cleric in the ranks of Al-Qaeda, he was often called the 'insurgent

theologian' by his peers and was known to produce propaganda videos for the Al-Qaeda to 'educate' insurgencies about their role in defending Islam. Similarly, the infamous Saudi born cleric Hamoud al-Aqla al-Shu'aybi who was operating in Afghanistan, was known to preach religious sermons instigating the ideologies of jihad, both in Saudi Arabia and in Afghanistan. He also released a fatwa lauding the Taliban after they destroyed the Buddha of Bamiyan statues while another former cleric operating from Afghanistan, Mullah Omar, later the leader and found of Taliban, was popularly often referred to as *amir-al-muminin* or the Commander of the Faithful.

(d) Weak governments enable localised insurgencies to spiral towards extremist ideologies because of large scale personal grievances and potential environment for its adoption

Long years of war and chaos on the soil has led millions of people to be internally displaced within Afghanistan as well as to migrate to other countries. Add to it the lack of natural resources due to it being a landlocked country, limited access to proper health care and educational institutions, a frail governmental structure accused of immense corruption, no sense of security for the citizenry and a poor dwindling economy, and we notice a pattern of why insurgencies in such precarious situations turn towards external religious ideological groups for support in their cause against the state.

Since the first civil war in Afghanistan, the aim of the insurgencies has remained the same – to destabilise and overthrow the government over differences on how the country should be led. Backed by ethnic differences but united by common grievances against the government, the first insurgencies were responsible of getting rid of Najibullah's communist government post the Soviet's exclusion from Afghanistan. Thereon, the ensuing interim governments in Afghanistan have embodied a weak structure where *"Civilian casualties, flagging reconstruction efforts, widespread official corruption, and the Afghan government's weakness in enforcing the rule of law have left a good deal of the population disillusioned."*[34] In such a situation of anarchy, the gaps in authority where filled by *"leaders of the Taliban, Al-Qaida, and other insurgent groups who wanted to overthrow the Afghan government and replace it with one grounded in an extremist interpretation of Sunni Islam"* (Jones, 2008).

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[34] Khalilzad, Z. (2011, September 26). *Former Ambassador to Afghanistan Warns We Must Take On Pakistan*. Newsweek.

The shift in the ideology of these insurgency groups can be pointed out to the fact that these ideologies helped vision a just society with normative rules and regulations. Building on a disadvantaged and weak government, the insurgencies such as the Taliban gravitated towards Al-Qaeda *"in exchange for guidance and training"* (Maizland, 2021). Taliban then adopted near state like structures, backed with authoritarian and hierarchical institutions lying in extremist religious ideologies, in this case, the Deobandi School of Thought which was an ultraconservative branch of Wahhabism that the Taliban saw as a force of stability and corruption free guidance. To compensate for the lack of policies and control on behalf of the Afghani government to promote the country as a legitimate Islamic state, the Taliban put together its own religious police force called the *Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai An Munkir*, Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice, that was responsible for moral policing of the people based on orthodox and extreme interpretation of the Sharia laws. Women were only allowed outside with their heads covered and with a related male attendant, men were forbidden from cutting their beards and forced to always wear a skull cap, music and theatre was banned where the Taliban *"recognized no Islam except their own."*[35]

Another factor in the case of Taliban swaying from a purely nationalist agenda to a religious ideology has been their alleged qualms over Pashtun under representation in the central government at the hands of rising power of other ethnic minorities such as the Uzbeks, Hazaras and Tajiks. In 1996, the Taliban, largely comprising of Pashtuns, attacked and captured Kabul from under the rule of then President Rabbani, a Tajik leader, questioning his corrupt and anti-Pashtuns policies. Quoting a lack in formal voice in decision making and a definite need to make substantial changes, the Taliban looked at religious ideologies in order to unite and gain support amongst the Sunni Muslims, most importantly the Pashtuns who form almost 38% of the Afghani population. It was found that Pashtun Afghans had sympathy for the Taliban and supported them and their allies as a result of "grievances against public institutions."[36]

Similarly, highlighting the need for more educational state institutions that were missing from Afghanistan due to decreased funds allocated to it by the government, the Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin insurgency gravitated towards the Ikhwan model of the Islamic revolution which

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[35] Johnson, T. H., & Mason, M. C. (2007). Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan. *Orbis*, *51*(1), 71–89.

[36] Maizland, L. (2021). The Taliban in Afghanistan. *Council on Foreign Relations*.

stressed on the need to create a purely Islamic state that centred around education and educational elites.

Currently, as of 2020, the Taliban has engaged in bilateral talks with the USA and has signed a peace agreement allowing it to enter into a *"power sharing negotiations with the Afghani government"*[37], another sign of the degrading state of the government in the country that has forced it to rely on support from an insurgent turned jihadist organisation. Even after the 'agreement', the Taliban with the help of Al-Qaeda has continued to target both the government and civilians (Maizland, 2021) due to an overall lack of authority and control on behalf of the national government.

(e) Indigenised issues in conflict areas force insurgencies to seek and adopt radical ideologies because of the specific and befitting content of their doctrines – definite gains both long and short term

Limited resources, large scale internal public displacement and unstable security environment in addition to constant ongoing war and disorder for more than a decade on the soil, are just some of the reasons that have contributed to Afghani insurgencies to seek out jihadist groups that fulfil their short- and long-term requirements. In this case, the religious ideology then itself as such does not have much to do with why insurgencies adopt such a doctrine but is in fact a pragmatic decision on the part of the insurgents. Since insurgencies in Afghanistan saw no clear path to boost both their materialistic and religious gains through the state structures, the jihadist ideology incentivised these insurgencies to join their cause by supplying them with an ideology that justified their use of violence while also amply rewarding them.

It was also found out that war-related crimes in Afghanistan during the civil wars such as smuggling of arms, opium trade, selling of other drugs, cross-border illegal trading, kidnapping and sometimes also contract killing were the main sources of income for the jihadist groups operating in the region. Since there was plenty of financial resources available at their disposal but only a few numbers of men to carry out the work within the group, the jihadists would often promise large amounts of money to local insurgencies to carry out their work on the fields. Jihadi groups such as the Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan though was a vast

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[37] Ibid.

spread network, in reality, there were only a certain number of people in the higher orders in the organisation that were responsible for the planning. Thus, there was always a requirement for men who would execute those plans. Always on the lookout for more funding, the insurgents would also in turn readily become a part of the jihadi network and carry out tasks for them. This is where the insurgencies were usually recruited to the groups, a pragmatic factor that had nothing to do with the ideology of the jihadist group or the insurgencies.

The cause to fulfil religious longing also provided both short- and long-term incentives to insurgencies to become radicalised in Afghanistan. Fighting against foreign rule to establish an Islamic state in Afghanistan and later to establish an all Islamic state, insurgencies would always be on the lookout to fulfil their religious obligations to the community. In such cases, leaders in Al-Qaeda were known to make use of religious sermons and fatwas by the local *ulamas* to push people into action in the name of religion. By promising *Jannah* (heaven) for martyrs of the cause and a good life beyond death, there was a long-term gratification that was promised to the insurgents besides materialistic gains in their present lives.

The role of regional politics in religion also held a compelling argument for why insurgencies in Afghanistan adopted jihadist ideologies. During the Soviet occupation and just after their withdrawal during the first civil war, the insurgencies were filled with the idea of Communism vs Islamism where the insurgency chose the better option as told to them by their religious leaders, a religious extremist ideology that served their purposes better than communism. This tactic worked especially well within the tribal settings in Afghanistan where the religious values held by the community and the legacy of the tribe holds high regards in the society. In a bid to be a part of the *"righteous jihad"*[38] in Afghanistan, it also remained in the interest of the insurgents to continue the war since they would also gain the admiration and respect within the community, another momentary benefit that pushed insurgencies towards adopting the jihadi doctrine. In addition to this, siding with a jihadist organisation like the Al-Qaeda that had a well-established foot hold in the region also gave a chance for the fragmented and competing Afghani insurgencies to gain more influence in the area with their support.

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[38] Fazli, R., Johnson, C. & Cooke, P. (2015). Understanding and Countering Violent Extremism in Afghanistan. *United States Institute of Peace*. Special Report 379.

Areas of conflict in addition also deal with certain unique domestic issues that may also push for a change in ideology and agenda for the insurgents. In the case of Afghanistan, one such issue was that the Taliban, one of the key insurgencies operating in Afghanistan during the civil wars was heavily fixated in creating a state of law based on Islamic principles of Sharia. Following the ideology of Deobandi, the Taliban worked extensively to curtail the governance and freedom of people in a modern sense and establish law and order according to a strict interpretation of Sharia. This further attracted other Sunni jihadist groups in the region to work together with the Taliban by making use of an all-encompassing extremist Islamic doctrine, one that had ideas of executing a global jihad, far larger than that Taliban had initially aimed for how to rule Afghanistan.

Although, it must be noted that even though the Taliban was following the Deobandi School of Thought, a Sunni Islamist ideology from the Wahhabi sect, there were certain instances where it would go against its own Islamic laws and partake in activities deemed unreligious, a prime example being the trade of opium. Opium growth in Afghanistan was a huge source of funding for the jihadist groups and the insurgencies where *"intrafractional struggle between Mujaheddin groups led to murder and robbery in order to gain control over opium caravans."*[39] Interestingly, at the peak of Taliban's rise during the civil war in 1997, the Taliban had almost 90% of the opium fields under its rule (Goodhand, 2000). Partnering with the Taliban, jihadist organisations such as the Al-Qaeda engaged in a two-way trade with the insurgency; the Taliban would allow easy access and cultivation of opium in Afghanistan despite its religious beliefs while the jihadi groups would provide training and support to their soldiers in return. Thus, with the help of the Taliban, the jihadi groups made Afghanistan a narco-state because of their wide scale network through which they smuggled opium across borders, further deepening the involvement of the Taliban insurgency with the jihadist organisations in the region.

1.3 Summary

In this chapter, the factors listed in our literature review as motivating mechanisms for insurgencies adopting jihadist ideologies during the course of civil wars were applied to the case of Afghanistan. For this purpose, all three of the civil wars that had occurred in

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[39] Carew, T. (2001). Jihad!: The Secret War in Afghanistan (Reprint. ed.). Mainstream Publishing. ISBN-13: 978-0756762568.

Afghanistan from 1989 – 2001 were studied. In addition, the effects of these mechanisms were also noted in parts in the aftermaths of these conflicts in the country. It was noted that for this case, indeed all the five factors listed stand true and were influential in pushing Afghani insurgencies into adopting jihadi ideologies during the wars. Playing a pivotal role of waging long term chaos and large scale grievances among the public, the war in Afghanistan presented classic incentives for insurgencies to shed their purely nationalist agendas and shift to a greater war of religion.

Like in many other Muslim countries, the call for jihad was first sounded with the advent of the Soviets into Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War. Under a foreign power, the Afghans consisting of various ethnicities, were motivated to break into several insurgency groups to fight against the Soviets, with the help of the USA which had its own vested interest in the region. The USA on its part, filled the Afghani insurgencies with funds, arms and war tactics to fight against the Soviets. However, after the Soviets left Afghanistan, these trained insurgencies now, still armed with weapons and cash, drifted towards a higher motive, one of fighting alongside their brothers in Jihad against infidels.

Secondly, the external funds by international actors were also utilised by clergies and ulamas in the Mosques and Madrasas to spread the word of jihad among the insurgencies and to further arm them with a strict religious ideology to guide them on their course. Since these religious heads were revered in Afghanistan, a lot of insurgencies were found to be treading on the path of jihad and conforming with jihadi organisations in the region such as the Al-Qaeda to fulfil their religious purpose of being defenders of the faith. The role of common identity here indeed played a large role. Even though the varying factions of insurgencies were at constant battles among each other owning to differences in ethnicities, the atrocities committed against their Muslim brothers worldwide was used as a common binding tool by the religious leaders to motivate them to join in the global jihad.

It was also noticed that the advent of foreign fighters to the region also majorly changed the course of these civil wars, by them introducing a factor of Sunni religious extremism, Wahhabism and Deobandi, within these local insurgencies. As the insurgencies struggled to maintain coordination among each other while simultaneously fighting against the government, these foreign fighters, mainly from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria and also Iraq to name a few countries, aided the insurgencies by establishing training camps and even funds to fight against the state while preparing them for a bigger religious war. These foreign

fighter also brought with them new age weapons and war tactics that they in turn taught the insurgencies in order to help their fight in the region.

The poor economic state of the country with no security, educational or health facilities for the population of Afghanistan and an overall weak state was another motivating factor that pushed insurgencies to seek help from jihadist organisations which promised a more stable 'state like structure' to the people. Afghanistan faced corrupt and broken governments one after the other during the course of the civil wars which resulted in extensive grievances among the population. This resulted in a shallow belief in the state system by the people at large, and by extension, the insurgencies. In this case, the insurgencies then found themselves gravitating towards jihadist organisations that provided them with the means and methods to fight against such a government, in some cases, also providing other incentives such as good food, security, employment opportunities etc that called out to these insurgencies. The long term benefits as well as the instant gratification of joining jihadist organisations were indeed very rewarding for the insurgents during the civil wars. Finding a path to serve their religious purpose by assisting their fellow Muslims in their cause, while also ensuring security and safety for themselves and their families was another major factor that motivated insurgencies in Afghanistan to adopt religious ideologies.

This case study thus indeed accentuates the key push factors that encourage insurgencies to shift to an extremist religious doctrine from an exclusively nationalist agenda during civil wars, and provides an analysis of the aforementioned factors being legitimate in the case of insurgencies in Afghanistan during the three civil wars that were witnessed by the country.

2. Syria

2.1 Beginning of Radical Reforms in Syria

The Syrian Civil War is one of the longest ongoing civil wars in the world with several multiparty agencies involved in this decade long conflict that began in March 2011. A spillover effect of the Arab winter in the Middle East, the Syrian civil war is currently being fought between the President, Bashar-al-Assad, against several domestic and foreign insurgencies who vehemently reject the Assad government on grounds of socio-economic injustice, grotesque violations of human rights, while demanding for strict domestic reforms. The protestors also demanded an end to the 50 years of state of emergency in Syria that was

implemented since 1963 and awarded power to the government to arrest and detain people and organisations that it deemed dangerous to the state, thus dramatically reducing the democracy in Syria.

The advent of the civil war in Syria happened with the Syrian Revolution as part of the broader Arab Spring protests throughout the region which lasted till July 2011. The Revolution started on March 15th when some youth in Damascus were arrested on charges of creating anti-government graffiti on the walls. Though the government said that the youth were not attacked on these charges, there were widespread protests in the city as a reaction to this incident where the local police clashed with the protesters and many people were injured. Following this, on March 20th, angry protesters burnt down the official building of Assad's Arab Social Ba'ath Party and in return were fired upon by the security forces there. This two-day conflict was a defining moment in the Syrian conflict that changed a nationalist revolution to a full-fledged armed conflict. Opposing the oppressive and murderous regime of the Syrian government, the people took to the streets in large numbers throughout the country to push Assad to resign as the President of Syria and were met with a heavy hand by the Syrian Army on the orders of the President. A large number of people were killed and several more injured, while many people were also taken in as political prisoners and prosecuted on false charges, proving in the process that the Syrian conflict will not reach a solution soon.

As a result, several national insurgencies emerged in the conflict zone to organise themselves formally against the Ba'ath government changing the path of the conflict to an organised civil uprising. This phase was marked by the formation of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a group of seven former soldiers of the Syrian National Army that joined hands to fight against Assad. Using guerrilla warfare techniques, the FSA was the first organised insurgency group in Syria that formed the military wing of the Syrian opposition to bring down the Assad government with the use of arms. Since the majority of the Syrian population are Sunnis living under the rule of the minority Shi'ite Alawite government, several insurgencies were created on an Islamist understanding and doctrine, a major factor that made them susceptible to welcome jihadi organisations and their ideology that were working in the region during the civil war.

The Syrian opposition presents a unique case in the civil war setting. Not only were there local nationalist insurgencies involved in the conflict such as the Southern Front, Islamic Front, Jayshal al-Ababil to name a few, several moderate Islamist groups such as the Suquor

al-Sham and the Umma Brigade (O'Bagy, 2012) were also present, while conservative Islamist groups such as Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham and Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) also operated actively on the ground usually with the support of Salafi Jihadist organisations in Syria namely the Al-Qaeda, The Jabhat al Nusra Front and later, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In addition to the rebel situation, foreign actors also heavily supported their preferred rebel or state factions based on their convenience and profits in the region. While the USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel and the whole of Arab League supported their own factions of Syrian oppositions against the Assad government, Iran, Russia and China on their part provided financial and global aid to the Syrian state to fight their war. The Alawite Syrian government under Assad was also dependent on Shi'ite insurgencies operating in Iran such as the Hezbollah to guide their war tactics and fund the state supporters during the civil war. Thus, the conflict in Syria was another case of proxy wars for political benefits that had multiple international actors diligently involved.

By February 2012 seeing no end to the war, the UN Security Council called for a resolution to find an apt solution to the Syrian conflict where many Western countries were set on disengaging the Bashar al-Assad government from power and to put in place sanctions against him. However, China and Russia, both allies of the Syrian state effectively vetoed the decision. However, in April 2012, a partial ceasefire was successfully managed by the former UN Secretary General (retired in 2006) and then the UN-Arab League Joint Special Representative of Syria, Kofi Annan, through the support of the UN and the Arab League. The ceasefire was signed between the FRA, other local opposition groups and the Syrian government which agreed to concessions to the public such as releasing of political prisoners and human right activists and pull back the army from attacking the public. However, by May 2012 already the peace plan crashed amidst violations from both the sides, and Syria was once again turned into a chaotic battlefield.

Through the course of the war, several Syrian opposition groups also created their own versions of the Syrian interim government with the aid of foreign actors. The Syrian National Council (SNC) was one of the first interim government formed in August 2011 in Istanbul to formally gain the support of the international community in fighting against the Bashar government. While the UK, USA and France accepted the group as a legitimate dialogue partner for the conflict in Syria, the Syrian President declared the organisation to be a rebel insurgency force and blamed the West for interfering and complicating the civil war further.

Following this in November 2012, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary Opposition Force or the Syrian National Coalition (not to be confused with the earlier Syrian National Council) was created in Doha that gained the favour of the Arab League as the official representative of the Syrian state. Though earlier the SNC and the Syrian National Coalition worked together, in 2014 they parted ways amidst questions on the legitimacy of both the groups. Later in 2017, yet another faction of the Syrian interim government showed up in the Idlib Governorate called the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG) which was supported by the Islamist insurgency HTS.

The Syrian Observatory of Human Rights has estimated 511,000 people dead[40] since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War with an even larger number gravely injured. According to the UNHCR, there are currently 6,6 Million refugees from Syria and another 6,7 Million that have been internally displaced[41]. Amid wide scale instability and with no end in sight to the ongoing civil war several insurgencies factions have been formed who aim to avenge their grievances by the Assad government and gain control of the country. Such a large number of insurgencies still operational in Syria has further helped foster the cause of jihadist organisations in the country where over the years of the war, several insurgencies have tailored and adopted these ideologies to suit their cause better. In the next section, we will use the five mechanisms listed earlier to gauge in the case of the Syrian Civil War if these factors indeed guided insurgencies to imbibe a jihadist ideology.

2.2 Factors

(a) Hijacking of regional politics and insurgent ideas by foreign actors through the use of monetary aid

While the Syrian Civil War presents a complex web of international and domestic actors actively involved in the war, the actors can be broadly categorised under two groups; the Syrian government led by Bashar al-Assad and the Opposition. Within these two groups, there are countries and militant insurgencies that support and aid both sides respectively. While China, Russia, Iran and the Lebanese terrorist organisation Hezbollah are the primary

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[40] *World Report 2019: Rights Trends in Syria*. (2019, January 23). Human Rights Watch.
[41] UNHCR. Syria Emergency. Retrieved from https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html

supporters of the Ba'ath government, the USA, UK, France, Turkey, the Arab League and Israel form the support group for the opposition. It is interesting to note here that the support of these countries are often not just restricted to official forces, but have also extended to several insurgency groups within the country over the course of the war, often to safeguard their own strategic interests in the region.

The majority Alawite government of Assad, a small sect of Shi'ite Muslims, has without a doubt received immense funding and support from Iran which has its own interest to act as a balance against the Sunni Saudi presence in Syria. To provide the insurgencies on the ground with an ideology and a religious justification to fight on behalf of the government, Assad has also welcomed the Hezbollah with open arms. Deemed as a terrorist organisation by the USA, UK, Germany and France to name a few countries, the Hezbollah is an Islamist political party based in Lebanon that enjoys close relations to Iran given their Shia roots. Thus, working alongside Iran in support of the Syrian government, Hezbollah has armed the Shia insurgencies in Syria with a religious doctrine while providing *"experienced veterans to a regime that is worried about the loyalty of its Sunni troops"* and *"training the militias that will bear an increasing portion of the fighting."*[42] In return, the Hezbollah wants its arms trade route that goes through Syria protected under Assad. Hence, the intervention of Iran has further complicated the ground realities of insurgencies gravitating towards extremist religious groups to fulfil their cause. A point to note here is indeed that while Shia Muslims are considered to be '*takfir'* (Muslims who are infidels) by the Sunni sect and do not follow the concept of jihad, Hezbollah is known to *"treat its soldiers who die in Syria as martyrs who died while being in the state of jihad while the party considers defending the religious sites in Syria as a religious obligation."*[43]

To counter the work of Iran and Russia in Syria, the USA on the other hand is *"supporting the rebels financially by providing arms and some training"*[44]. While the USA has flooded the Syrian conflict zone with weaponry and funds under the guise of using them against the ISIL, however, in doing so the country has further pushed the armed insurgencies to seek refugee with other jihadist organisations operating in the country such as the Ahrar al-Sham, in order to find tactical support to fight against the ISIL and its powerful allies. As a result,

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[42] Jenkins, B. M. (2013). The Role of Terrorism and Terror in Syria's Civil War. *The RAND Corporation*.
[43] Tokmajyan, A. (2014). Hezbollah's Military Intervention in Syria: Political Choice or Religious Obligation? *Approaching Religion, 4*(2), 105–112.
[44] Leonetti, C. (2019). The Syrian Civil War, Foreign Involvement and Violations of International Humanitarian Laws. *Luiss Guido Carli*.

these insurgencies have been further indoctrinated with jihadist ideologies by their partnering organisations, leading them astray from their purely nationalised agendas. What is interesting to note here however, is that the advent of the Islamic State to Syria was in fact a by-product of the 2003 Iraqi invasion by the USA, the aftermaths of which founded the Islamic State and spread to neighbouring countries including Syria from there.

In addition, foreign countries such as the USA and Saudi Arabia have funded several interim Syrian governments stationed in neighbouring countries over the years who in turn have trusted insurgency groups on the land to fight for their cause. Without a direct physical leadership and control on their activities, these heavily funded insurgencies have been left free to switch sides as per their convenience and gains. Often in such cases, jihadist organisations, especially the Syrian homegrown jihadi group, Al Nusra Front, has become the prominent patron of these well-funded but misguided insurgencies. Supporting this statement, according to a report titled 'Jihad in Syria' (O'Bagy, 2012), *"US. allies are already providing material support to the Syrian opposition, and competing sources of funding threaten Syria's future stability by enhancing the influence of more radical elements"*.

Saudi Arabia on the other hand emerged as the sponsor for moderate Sunni rebel forces operating in Syria due to its strategic interest in the region and acting as a counter-balance against the Iranian funded insurgencies. Though most of the insurgencies conglomerations funded by Saudi such as the Syrian Revolution Front (SRF) and Jaysh al-Islam, a banner unit of the FSA, are not extremist in their ideologies and were mainly created to fight against the Al-Qaeda and ISIL in the region, these groups had their own ideas of an Islamist way of working of the Syrian government. This has led to the flooding of religious extremist thoughts between this rebel conglomeration, fanned by the Saudi government, shifting its direction from being a mere revolutionary force, and opening the gates for possible future coalition with more extremist Salafi groups as was the case when the SRF joined hands with the Al-Nusra Front to fight the ISIL in 2014 at Idlib and Aleppo. Saudi Arabia along with Qatar has also been speculated to send weapons and arms to Syrian insurgencies through Turkey and Jordan (Hughes, 2013), making these groups more dependent on the ideas and religious doctrine supplied by these countries.

(b) Jihadi Foreign Fighters

The Syrian Civil War has attracted more than 30,000 foreign fighters since its inception, the largest number of foreign fighters to partake in any conflict, owning to the religious and geopolitical importance that the country holds. The influx of foreign fighters to Syria however, is not a novel feature of the civil war. Even before the Syrian civil war started in 2011, the Assad government had ties with several factions of foreign fighters from Lebanon and Palestine that helped the state control the regular rebels in the country. While most of these foreign fighters joined the Fatah al-Islam insurgency in Syria, the state's support to Palestinian liberation groups such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PiJ), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Hamas to name a few (O'Bagy, 2012) also brought independent foreign fighters to Syria in large numbers.

On the side of the Assad government, the state military provided protection and supplies to the supporting Shia foreign fighters incoming from Iraq, Iran and Lebanon. Fully funded and secured, these transnational fighters would then engage in spreading religious extremists views to the small Shia minority in the country to gather their support for their cause, often by stating the misdemeanour of the Sunni Muslims in the country. These foreign fighters would then further mobilise the Shi'ites insurgencies in Syria to take recruit actively to the state military as well as to join other extremist religious organisations such as Hamas and the Hezbollah that supported the Assad government. In this process, the foreign fighters pushed the minority Shi'ites and the Shia insurgencies to follow and adapt to religious doctrine and instructions disseminated by the organised terrorist groups as a survival mechanism against the Sunni rebels.

Porous borders and the lack of effective border control in Syria can be listed as the key reason for the influx of foreign fighters in large numbers from neighbouring countries who *"believe that it is their duty to help protect their Muslim brethren in Syria"*.[45] One of the biggest jihadi groups working in Syria, the ISIL itself was formed by a handful of foreign fighters who had entered Syria from Iraq after the blowback of the US invasion in 2003. This ease of entering and exiting the country at their own convenience has helped the foreign fighters to infiltrate areas governed by rebel insurgency forces undetected, interact with the insurgencies there, introduce them to religious ideologies brought back from their countries, encourage its adoption, and often go back to their home base. The Syrian rebels controlling the northern territory of Aleppo, Idlib and Ar Raqqah have been known to allow the easy

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[45] O'Bagy, E. (2012). Jihad in Syria. *Institute for the Study of War*. Middle East Report 6.

entry of foreign fighters from Turkey, Iraq and even Lebanon which has resulted in them having a more religious outlook to the civil war from their interactions with these foreign fighters, effectively paving the way for their future radicalisation by them (Hegghammer, 2013).

These foreign fighters would also often tailor their messages and tactics to suit the "local context", hence gaining more credibility (Bakke, 2014) as was seen to be the case with the foreign fighters working in the jihadi Jabhat al-Nusra group who fashioned "their foreign-borne ideologies with indigenous frames" which appealed more to the local insurgencies, hence helping them attract more rebel groups to support them in their war for jihad (Rich and Conduit, 2014). Interestingly, even though the al-Nusra front is a Syrian homegrown jihadi organisation, the group has attracted several foreign fighters to its ranks since the group also greatly benefits from the new age war tactics and strategies that these foreign fighters bring with them.

Additionally, several Islamist insurgency conglomerations in Syria funded by foreign powers such as the Jaysh al-Islam group funded by Saudi Arabia, also welcomed foreign fighters from the funding countries where these foreign fighters used their extremist ideology to promote terrorism[46]. Syria thus saw several groups emerge that were established by foreign fighters who held more stringent and vague ideas than the ones held by the local insurgencies. As a result, Syrian insurgencies were left with a choice to either join well established jihadist organisations operating in the country such as JAN or the ISIL, or to join hands with newly formed Sunni Islamist groups such as the one mentioned above in order to receive protection and funds for their missions. In either case, domestic insurgencies in Syria were introduced to extremist religious ideologies, one that greatly differed from their revolutionary aims.

Several foreign fighters are also drawn to Syria in order to fulfil their religious purpose in the historic country and to help create the Caliphate in the region. With the aim to live in the state like structure offered by jihadi organisations such as the ISIL while carrying out their religious ambitions, foreign fighters often spread the word of these groups to the local rebel forces that they come in contact with, push for a mobilising effect and effective recruitment to such jihadist organisations. For example, many foreign fighters who had migrated to Syria

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[46] Mentioned in Resolution 2178, adopted by the UN Security Council on 24 September 2014 in response to the rising numbers of foreign fighters.

to fight along with the FSA against the Assad government, ended up joining the fight for global jihad instead with the Al-Nusra Front and the ISIL (Borum and Fein, 2016), effectively taking along with them insurgency networks that they had come in contact with from their FSA days. Another way that foreign fighters attract local insurgencies to join jihadi groups in Syria is jihad tourism. Portraying an image of stability and a well settled life while posing with a Kalashnikov, these images of power and control shared by the foreign fighters on common social media platforms then further motivate insurgencies that are born in chaos and are looking for some control over their lifestyle to seek organisations that these foreign fighters are a part of. The social media recruiting campaigns of the ISIL have employed such strategies by using foreign fighters as cases to attract the local insurgencies to their cause.

(c) Religiosity goes up during wars leading to the ideological shift, often with the help of the clergy

Syria holds an important place in the historical and religious texts in Islam for both the Shi'ites and the Sunni Muslims alike. For the Sunnis, Syria is mentioned as the place of the final battle in the Hadith, an important religious text based on the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBOH). These sayings "refer to the confrontation of two huge Islamic armies in Syria, a great battle near Damascus, and intervention from the north and west of the country" where in a popular Hadith saying about where the next jihad will be, the Prophet answers,

"Go for Sham, and if you can't, go for Yemen ...(though) God has guaranteed me Sham and its people.".[47]

For the Shias on the other hand, the country marks the right place to be at before the world ends where Imam Mahdi, a descendent of the Prophet, will emerge to establish Islamic rule around the world. Naturally, the Syrian Civil War has attracted several Muslims from around the globe to come and fight for their religion in this 'last battle', thus adding a more severe form of religious overtones to the war than the nationalist and ethnic ones already present.

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[47] Karouny, M. (2014, April 1). Apocalyptic prophecies drive both sides to Syrian battle for end of time. *Reuters USA*.

This religious importance of Syria also explains the large scale influx of foreign fighters to the country to fight in the civil war.

Battling a highly secretarial war composed of several ethnic groups with no visible end, the people and insurgencies in Syria have time and again turned to their religious leaders for guidance and advice. In such a scenario, the teachings of the imams and mullahs have been really important in uniting the rebel forces together to create a *fitna*, an opposition against the repressive Assad regime. As a result, the mosques became the sites for the dissemination of religious sermons and fatwas on how to fight against the government. It also important to note that in the wide lack of formal education, the mosques and madrasas in Syria accounted as places for imparting education throughout the country, creating *"a societal and religious basis for a fledgling Syrian insurgency against a blasphemous regime"* (Bakour, 2020). Riled with religious fervour, these sites were responsible for supplying radicalised thoughts and doctrine to the people who visited these institutions thus, further pushing the agenda for the civil war towards a holy war for religion. Since these sites were often frequented by people distraught within a dwindling economy, the madrasas in Syria, just like in most Islamic countries dealing with the problem of jihadism, formed fertile recruiting grounds for jihadist groups. Often the religious head of these institutions had close connections with the high level workers in the jihadist group and would serve as trustworthy partners in supplying insurgents to carry out work for them as was seen to be the frequent case with JAN.

Though the ulamas were in fact state sponsored religious leaders, after the mass uprising and destruction faced by the people of their faith, a lot of the ulamas in Syria resigned from their state position and held permanent independent religious positions at the local mosques and religious institutions established by the opposition rebel groups and insurgencies. Motivated by their religious leaders to fulfil their dual purpose; fight for the religion while battling against the Assad regime, several local insurgencies adopted jihadi ideologies. For example in the region of Idlib and Homs, the largest rebel held areas, the ulamas were known to support the armed rebellion while in *"Damascus and Aleppo, the two major governorates, dozens of senior 'ulama vocally criticized the government's bloody policy where, the preacher of al-Hasan Mosque, Sheikh Muhammad Abū al-Hudā al-Ya'qūbī, called for jihad against the regime"* (Bakour, 2020).

Most of the local insurgencies in Syria were further powered by the religious righteousness to protect their religion from the 'aggressive' Shia 'infidels' who were in control of the government. Encouraged by their local ulamas, these insurgents then also welcomed jihadist organisations to help them establish an alternate form of governance in the country. While most moderate rebels wished to form a government guided by Islamic principles, the more extremists ones wanted to establish a full-fledged Islamic State guided by the principles of Sharia alone. Having been dealt severely at the hands of their democratic government, it is these extremists that gravitated towards jihadi groups that mirrored the same sentiments as them; the Jabhat al-Nusra Front whose goal is to establish an Islamic State in Syria, the Al-Qaeda that wishes to establish a regional Muslim Islamic State in the Middle East and the ISIL that has a higher goal of establishing a Muslim Caliphate. Looking for a substitute for the state where they could be free, the Syrian insurgencies also realised that demonstrating a stringent religious ideology would ensure their survival (Toft, 2007). It is thus, only natural that the insurgencies were pushed towards adopting a stronger religious ideology than the one they previously followed.

(d) Weak governments enable localised insurgencies to spiral towards extremist ideologies because of large scale personal grievances and potential environment for its adoption

The minority Alawite government of Bashar al-Assad in power for the last 21 years in Syria has often been blamed for dividing the country along secretarial lines, pitching one ethnic group against the other as part of their power play. While usually non-state actors and terror tactics are related to third party elements, the Assad government has had ties with the militia since way before the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. Known to support and safeguard the arms route for Hezbollah that passes through Syria, President Assad has also made use of other Shia militia and terrorist organisations from Iraq, Iran and Lebanon time and again to repress the uprisings against him. With its history of state sponsored terrorism, the Syrian government has also been providing security to these terrorist groups via the Syrian intelligence, thereby aiding in establishing a strong foothold of militia in the country.

As part of the larger Arab Spring, the autocratic Syrian government faced a series of backlashes and protests against their corrupt and authoritarian rule. While the Sunni majority

in Syria were largely unhappy with their low representation in the government, there was a wide scale distrust among the people regarding the government's workings. The Ba'ath government reacted with a strong heavy hand to these protests by making use of the state army to attack the people. Consequently, the *"Assad regime escalated violence, causing secularists and moderate Islamists to take up arms alongside the radical elements."[48]*

As ethnic identities intensified during the war and people were aggravated by the weak functioning of the government, several insurgencies, both Shia and Sunni alike, came into being throughout the country. Though earlier the Assad regime was heavily supported by certain militia groups, the unstable character of the war led to continuous group shuffling. Thus, those jihadist elements that were earlier assisting Assad, have now turned against their former regime allies and are cooperating with local jihadists (O'Bagy, 2012). These groups made use of the same networks and logistical lines that were once protected by the Assad regime to invite other jihadi organisations from neighbouring countries that used the weak governance by Assad as an excuse to feed their religious doctrine to the local insurgencies. Thus, the support for such non-state actors earlier by the government and the weak control on these groups later is largely responsible for distraught local insurgencies to join extremist organisations to support them in their nationalist agenda.

Furthermore, the constant bombing and attacks on rebel held zones in Syria by the state such as in the city of Idlib, has also led to large personal grievances among the general public who have lost their educational and healthcare systems in the act. Caught in the cross-fire between the rebels and the state, the people have been left with no choice but to seek help from their local insurgent leaders for protection and safety. As a result, they have been more open to adopting religious extremist ideologies as long as their lives are protected and their families safe. The Jabhat al-Nusra Front and the ISIL operating in Syria are "reportedly running schools and providing social assistance to people in areas under their control" (Jenkins, 2013). Though these schools largely comply with a jihadi curriculum, they provide medical supplies, cater to the educational needs of the children and also provides a sense of security under their rule to people tired under a weak government. The use of threat of jihadists by the Assad regime has further pushed those unhappy with his government to join hands with other jihadi forces working in its opposition. One way or another, Syrian insurgencies have inculcated the jihadi doctrine as a survival mechanism.

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[48] O'Bagy, E. (2012). Jihad in Syria. *Institute for the Study of War*. Middle East Report 6.

Tired of the decade long civil war, local insurgencies in Syria are now trying to optimise their fight against the government to establish a new one guided by Islamic principles. These Sunni insurgencies in the country can thus be divided between the moderates and the extremists. While the moderate groups such as the Umma Brigade and Suquor al-Sham envision a democratic state governed by Islamic principles, the extremists believe that the fundamental principles of democracy are entirely a Western concept and do not work well with the Islamic way. While not all insurgents are extreme Islamists, *"personal religious fervor"* (O'Bagy, 2012) and the aid received by these jihadi organisations have pushed the insurgencies into their extremist paths. Quoting the shortcomings and brutality of this 'democratically elected' government, these insurgencies such as XYZ and XYZ join hands with jihadi organisations operating in the region to further their ideas. Highlighting the mistreatment of the Sunni population at the hands of the Alawite government has also helped these organisations gain mass support for their actions who promise the establishment of a just Islamic State in the country like JAN and the Al Qaeda.

Furthermore, the support for the Syrian interim government by the West has increased the already prevalent confusion about the multiple parties involved in the war, while the responsibility of the public is being taken by none. In such precarious situations, the support of the public has been cut between standing by the local insurgencies and as an extension, jihadi organisations to attain basic resources, or to support the interim Syrian government, the official representation of the Syrian government that finds itself with no actual power to influence the decision making in the country. While the Assad government continues tormenting and ill-governing, the country suffers from a poor socio-economic situation where the local insurgencies have shifted their reliance on jihadi organisations instead to provide them with a sound religious justification along with funds and resources to fight their war.

(e) Indigenised issues in conflict areas force insurgencies to seek and adopt radical ideologies because of the specific and befitting content of their doctrines – definite gains both long and short term

State support for jihadists fighting from their side presents a unique localised problem in the Syrian civil war context. The rebel factions find themselves not only fighting against the

government of Assad, but also against the militia fighting in support for the government such as fighters from Hezbollah and Hamas. Finding no alternatives to support them financially and morally for the fight against the government and its militia allies, local insurgencies in Syria have been known to knock at the doors of jihadist organisations to look for economic and tactical support. This has led to an overly complex and fluid dynamics of rebel groups mobilisation and group formation, giving rise to various indigenous problems within the war setting.

The first of these problems is the increasing secretarial direction of the war as compared to the earlier nationalist course of the war. Since there are several different sects and forces at play in the civil war, there are great underlying tensions noticed between the *"complex mosaic of Sunnis, Shias, Alawites (a Shia sect), Christians, Druze, Kurds, and others"* (Jenkins, 2013). These ethnic tensions have led to an increased sense of ethnic identity between the local insurgencies with each group looking to stay afloat with the help of its own community. Amidst an almost failed state structure and chaotic nature of life, these insurgencies often find themselves gravitating towards well established jihadist organisations that imitate a stable state and where "survival are increasingly based on ethnic and sectarian identities" (Jenkins, 2013). Due to similar political and theological views shared by the insurgencies and the jihadi groups operating in Syria, mainly to establish an Islamic State governed by Islamic ideas instead of Western forms of democracy, the jihadi groups find themselves with large bases of supporters in the local rebel forces, though the scale of their networks and plans greatly differs. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an important member of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), also made heavy use of this secretarial divide and of his *"hatred of Shia"*[49] to attract Sunni rebel forces in Syria to join their Levant branch operating in the country.

Since the inter-group dynamics in Syria are very unstable, loyalty often also shifts easily from one group to another based entirely on which group can provide the most direct and short-term gains to the insurgencies. The case of ISIL in Syria highlights this point effectively. The group that aims to establish the Muslim Caliphate starting from Syria has often called out to the religious obligations of Muslims around the world to help them fight for their cause. Promising a great life post-jihad, the group also offers a stable state like structure with an innate hierarchical society for the people of Syria and the local insurgencies

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[49] *Exploiting Disorder: Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*. (2021, June 16). *Crisis Group*.

in the present life to those who support their mission. In addition, the jihadi group also offers materialistic support to the rebel fighters such as weaponry and funds, while also opening educational and healthcare institutions for the families of these insurgents within the territories they hold. Living in a life of chaos for over a decade with lack of state institutions explains why insurgencies seek out to join the ISIL in the region. Thus, even though the Islamic State only held a strong position as a jihadist rebel group in the later stages of the civil war, it has managed to steal away local insurgency support from the Al-Qaeda and JAN operating in the region precisely because of the materialistic aid it offers.

On the other hand, the Jabhat al-Nusra, the Syrian homegrown jihadist organisation, has also managed to incite the insurgencies to join their cadres in large numbers. Grown out of the injustice and issues faced by the Syrians under Assad, the group has proved its ability to gain the support of the local population (O'Bagy, 2012). Although JAN broke out from the Al-Qaeda, it remains a patron of Al-Qaeda's jihadist ideologies. However, localising their missions and doctrine, the group only aims to establish a Sunni Islamic State within Syria, a major deflection from Al-Qaeda's policy of a worldwide Islamic order (Rich & Conduit, 2014). This has lent a great local support to JAN by insurgencies and the Syrian population who wish to replace the present 'democratically elected' Ba'ath government with a more religious fundamentalist form of governance. Since the group resonates their socio-political views of nationalised jihad, the Jabhat al-Nusra has managed a great degree of local support despite the fact that there were *"significant number of civilian victims of its operations"*.[50] The group has also fought on behalf of the Syrian insurgencies against the state forces, *"offering a strong counter-narrative designed not only to defeat the regime, but also to deter locals from supporting other Islamist or Jihadi contenders on the ground"*[51] hence, further gaining the favour of moderate insurgencies who look at foreign based jihadi groups with suspicion. Additionally, the group engages in 'people orientated' policies in the short-term such as *"social welfare"* (Adraoui, 2017) and catering the security needs of the insurgencies and people at large who cannot rely on their government.

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[50] Cepoi, E. (2013). The Rise of Islamism in Contemporary Syria: From Muslim Brotherhood to Salafi-Jihadi Rebels. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, *13*(3), 549-560.

[51] Sluglett, P., & Kattan, V. (2019). Violent Radical Movements in the Arab World: The Ideology and Politics of Non-State Actors (Library of Modern Middle East Studies). I.B. Tauris.

2.3 Summary

The five motivational factors that we listed above to explain how national insurgencies adopt a jihadi doctrine during the course of the war fit the case study of the civil war in Syria, just as was the case in Afghanistan. The ethnic differences and the autocratic nature of the Bashar al-Assad government formed the bases of the Syrian civil war as a consequential next step in the fall of governments throughout the region in the Arab Spring. Being the Alawite Shia minority government in the country, there was considerable dissatisfaction among the largely Sunni population residing in Syria against the corrupt government. This led to protests in several cities in the country that were met by counter attacks by the Syrian state army which changed the quiet protests to a full-fledged armed conflict leading to several insurgencies sprouting up throughout the country. Given the long duration of the war and the uncertainty of outcomes surrounding it, the five factors indeed show how Syrian insurgencies were incentivised to shift from a completely nationalist agenda to a more religious one in order to stay afloat.

The role of foreign intervention in Syria is an important factor that has pushed the course of jihad within Syrian insurgents. With countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait supporting and funding Sunni Islamists in the country to fight against the Shia Ba'ath government, it is not surprising that highly underfunded insurgents in the region were motivated by the many resources left at the disposal of these groups and often partnered with them to push their cause, in the process imbibing their extremist religious agenda. On the other hand, there were several militia groups fighting on the behalf of and alongside the state government as well. Iraq, Iran and Lebanon provided Assad with these Shia fighters from terrorist groups like the Hamas and Hezbollah. These fighters brought with them a strong religious doctrine that they passed on to the Shia insurgencies fighting in the war. Other countries such as the USA and France for example also supported interim Syrian governments that exist in neighbouring countries and often recruit jihadi organisations operating in Syria to carry on their ground work.

Other factors that contribute to this ideological shift within the insurgencies can be pointed down to the large influx of foreign fighters to the country and the intense religious notions attached to the war in Syria. The country finds an extremely important place religiously

where in the Hadith, the texts containing the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBOH), it is listed as the place where the final battle for the world would take place. Consequently, the Syrian battleground is flooded with numerous foreign fighters from around the world as well as religiously charged locals that aim to fulfil their duties as a Muslim by partaking in the war against the infidels. These foreign fighters then bring with themselves a certain extremist ideology from their home countries and new war tactics that they then later effectively pass on to the insurgencies operating in a smaller scale in Syria. Armed with an ideology and knowledge in how to carry on attacks, these insurgencies then find it easier to assimilate with jihadist organisations such as the ISIL and Al-Qaeda to carry out tasks for them in the name of nationalism.

Amidst other problems and grievances faced by the Syrian population over lack of fundamental security, healthcare, education and ill-treatment from the government, the support base for these jihadi groups have also dramatically increased. Specially for home grown jihadi organisation such as the Jabhat al-Nusra Front, there is now wide appreciation for their goal to remove the corrupt and weak government, to establish another one guided by Islamic principles. As a result, several local insurgencies find themselves attached to these groups to carry out small operations in the country, the repeated interaction thus engaging an ideological transfer to the insurgents. These insurgencies then aim to fulfil a dual purpose; fight against their oppression while also targeting the infidel Shia government and establishing a Sunni Islamic power. Thus, their goals align with jihadi groups such as JAN and ISIL in the region who aim to carry out the establishment of an Islamic State in Syria albeit on a much larger scale. Furthermore, the motivation to carry out their religious duties delivered through fatwas and sermons by their local religious leaders delivered in madrasas also encourage small time insurgencies to join jihadi organisations that are waging the war for religion.

It is precisely these factors as listed above that has radicalised insurgencies in Syria to support jihadi groups like the ISIL in their mission, thereby extensively growing the presence of the group in Syria and leading them to hold vast territories under their control. However, currently the ISIL in Syria has lost much of its territories over the years due to international interventions while also rapidly losing their control over the local insurgencies that support them. However, with no end in sight to Syria's ongoing civil war, these groups, especially the ISIL, are slowly regaining their strength and charting out ways to regain their hold on the

region. The local insurgencies on their part find themselves at the receiving end of persecution from international actors for their support to such organisations and ideologies, while their nationalist mission to establish a just government still remains unfulfilled. Thus, it remains to be seen whether jihadi organisations working in Syria would again be able to mobilise the local insurgencies to join them further or whether the insurgents would maintain a distance from such extremist doctrine in the coming future. It is important to reiterate here that since the Syrian Civil War is an ongoing conflict, it is ever evolving and the factors affecting the mechanisms that push local insurgency on the path of jihad may also evolve accordingly to revel other new factors or to add more depth to the factors listed here.

D. Conclusion

In the theoretical part of this thesis, there were established five factors that impact the ideological shift in insurgencies working in a civil war setting, effectively influencing them to imbibe jihadi ideology through its course. These factors or mechanisms were first explained extensively by making use of peer-reviewed academic articles and research by other social scientists. Consequently, after establishing the factors, they were applied to the case of civil wars in Afghanistan and Syria. Though some of these factors were found to be more significant in one case rather than the other, both the case studies conformed to the motivational mechanisms to explain our research question – "How do some antecedent civil wars pave the way for future ideological jihadisation of the part of insurgency?".

In the case of both Afghanistan and Syria it was found that indeed pre-war situations were an important push factor in the evolvement of the civil war in these countries. The pre-war setting also provided an environment for local insurgencies to seek the path of jihad in order to stay relevant to their nationalist cause. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and later their catastrophic withdrawal from Afghanistan worked as the main catalyst to break out three continuous full-fledged civil war in the country amidst the chaos that ensued. On the other hand, in the case of the Syrian civil war and the insurgencies working within it, they were more influenced by the regional adversity of the Arab Spring that greatly determined the beginning and course of the civil war in the country.

In both the countries furthermore, ethnic identities and community bonds also had expansive effects on the course that the actors in these civil wars took. While secretarial divide was the common denominator in both the Afghani and Syrian Civil War, both the wars however also present a unique situation of differences arising out of ethnic identities. While in Afghanistan, tribalism among different ethnic groups was more prominent, Syria presented a more one-on-one situation of a sect divide between the Alawite Shias and the Sunni majority population. These secretarial divides further complicated the war scene, aggravating the issues of poor eco-social conditions and large personal grievances among the public. It is these circumstances that led to different insurgencies sprouting across both the countries to fight against the several ethnic rebel factions who wanted to claim power to the government in Afghanistan, and against the alleged corrupt and insensitive government of Assad in Syria.

Having established the background for the emergence of insurgencies in Afghanistan and Syria as a result of the civil war, the thesis further looked into the possible reasons behind these nationalistic rebel forces adopting a jihadi approach during the war. It was found that while there were ever present religious overtones from the beginning of the wars, jihadi organisations only became influential in the war ridden areas primarily due to external factors, though the personal religious fervour of the people in these countries also greatly aided this transition.

It goes without saying that amidst great chaos that these civil wars bring, most insurgencies rely on their religion and religious leaders for moral guidance. While already established that religious and ethnic differences are the main push factors behind the starting of these civil wars, this aspect continues well within the course of the war. Rising sympathies against the wrong done to 'their people' by the others, laced with the encouragement by the ulamas to fight against the infidels, has been an important mechanism that has polarised the views of insurgencies on religion in both Syria and Afghanistan, pushing them towards their jihadisation. Presenting a justification for their use of violence in these wars, the local religious heads are known to twist the words of religious texts to further push the insurgencies into fighting for the greater Holy War, the national civil war only being a small part of it. Since these ulamas are well revered in Islamic societies, these clergies enjoy both power to shape the course of the war and to shape the coalition of insurgencies with other groups with similar aims of establishing an Islamic State. Thus, making use of the period of

chaos and trauma, the ulamas use religion as a guiding principle for insurgencies to join hands with jihadist organisations operating in the region.

It was also found that in an environment of resource crunch and instability, local insurgencies often gravitated towards those jihadi groups that were well established and heavily funded, in order to gain financial or other logistical support from them. Since the local insurgencies now had external contact to gain funds and arms, they were less dependent for support from among the local population as was the case earlier, and could thus be more independent in their decision to join such extremist organisations and adopt their ideologies. In this case, even if the insurgencies did not completely agree with the jihadi doctrine followed by these groups, the pragmatic decision to gain support, finances and even human resources from them would often push the insurgencies to accept jihadi beliefs, at least on its face value. The abundance of funds and other materialistic things also then prolonged the civil wars since the insurgencies were now armed with an ideology and a reason to fight longer than they would have without this external support.

Additionally, it was this pragmatic approach to win the war that pushed the insurgents in both Afghanistan and Syria to also rely on foreign dollars from abroad for their operations, thereby expanding the civil war further due to multiparty foreign interventions. In the case of the first Afghani Civil War, the USA and Saudi Arabia were mainly responsible for filling the war field with arms and money in order to push back the support for the Soviet Union in the area. Using the Afghanistan war as a proxy war, the USA and Soviet Union both played their parts to turn Afghanistan as one of their supporters during the then ongoing Cold War. As both sides funded insurgencies to win more support, they simply flooded more money in a region that lacked a sound leader, pushing the money rich insurgencies to partner with other jihadi organisations in return for tactical know-how on how to fight their wars. The same case was noticed in Syria where external funding from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait for the Sunni insurgencies and from Iraq, Iran and Lebanon for the Assad supporting Shia insurgencies, only further divided the religious gaps between the two sects in the war, in what was earlier a purely nationalistic rebellion. In both cases, these foreign countries also greatly funded madrasas in these conflict regions as was the case with the USA and Saudi Arabia funding Pakistani madrasas that was responsible for training the Afghani Mujahedeens who later formed the Taliban. These madrasas were known to follow a jihadi curriculum that armed the insurgencies with a religious ideology, making the students "*susceptible to romantic notions*

of sectarian and international jihads"[52]. Simultaneously, the active jihadi organisations in the region further interacted with the insurgents in the madrasas, later training them, as was seen with the Al-Qaeda's role in training the Afghani insurgents that were attending religious classes in the Pakistani madrasas.

Another motivating factor for insurgencies to adopt a jihadi doctrine was found to be the role of jihadi foreign fighters that have entered the civil wars in these countries and filled the battle field with strong religious ideologies, such as Wahhabism and Salafism, brought from their home countries. Both the Afghanistan and Syrian Civil War are classic examples of the large scale influx of foreign fighters, due to religious reasons that has later altered the course of these wars precisely due to the presence of strong religious ideologies. Often well trained and experienced in wars, these foreign fighters work on the grievances of the local insurgencies to arm and train them to reach their goals, furthering the narrative of 'us vs them'. The foreign fighters in both Syria and Afghanistan were also known to tailor their ideologies to fit the local narrative in order to minimise the backlash that they might receive, and also to build a sense of trust and commonality with the insurgents. These efforts would often result in the local insurgencies partnering with foreign fighters for their wars, slowly inculcating broader ideas and ideologies brought by these distant fighters. The war in Syria is a perfect case study where an exorbitant number of foreign fighters entered the war scene, only to present a more religiously backed approach to the war than was the case before during the anti-government rebellions.

Furthermore, the role of unstable and corrupt governments are also very influential in pushing insurgencies to shift towards jihadi organisations. Both Afghanistan and Syria have fallen at the hands of either a weak or an authoritarian government respectively that has been the main catalyst for these civil wars to erupt. While the insurgencies lacked the capacities to take on the state alone, the jihadi groups then step here to not only provide support to the insurgents in their fight, but also portray an image of an alternative to the weak government that these insurgencies so desperately want to dispose. In Syria, the ISIL and JAN promised to establish a purely Islamic State ruled by justice, while in Afghanistan the Al-Qaeda has promised a similar state with the Taliban actually delivered on it. With the complete absence of state institutions for health care, education and even security, jihadi groups such as the ISIL and JAN in Syria have been known to provide and open educational and health institutions for the

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[52] Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military. (2002). *International Crisis Group*, ICG Asia Report No. 36.

people in the areas under their control. These basic rights that the insurgents and the people at large do not receive from their government, but from a jihadi organisation, leaves them vulnerable to the ideologies of these groups as well. As Barbara F Walter says in her paper titled 'The New New Civil War' (2017), jihadist organisation in such precarious situations often show an image of commitment to a cause and welfare for the followers of its religion, a kind of stability that the people and the insurgencies can no longer expect from their government and its leaders.

In general, the motivation for insurgencies to become jihadised within civil wars can be brought down to be either a pragmatic decision influenced by the need to be on the winning side of the war, or as a purely religious outcome in order to fulfil their holy obligations. However, external factors such as the role of foreign interventions and religious leaders are the key motivators that present an apt situation where it is profitable for local insurgencies to adopt a more extremist religious doctrine than the ones they earlier followed. The role of a corrupt and weak state and pre-war scenarios also greatly affects this transition of the insurgencies fighting a national war to a religious one. However, although all five factors listed above correspond well to both the case studies of Afghanistan and Syria, it is indeed important to note that some factors will be more relevant to one case than to the other. In addition, since the Syrian war is an ongoing conflict, the relevance of these factors may change accordingly to the changing war scenarios. Thus, further and continued research on this topic is advisable and needed.

1.1 Limitations

This research makes use of academically relevant research from published articles, journals and books to complement the arguments put forth here. However, there are some limitations to this study.

First off, during the course of this research, it was found that language presented to be a strong barrier in getting access to first- hand records of reports on these civil wars from the local and regional media. The country of Afghanistan makes use of Dari and Pashto for most of its reporting, if any easily available, while content on the ongoing civil wars in Syria were widely circulated in the Arabic language. Though there are several other sources available that deal with this research topic in great depth, I reckon that some information might have

been lost in translation or simply not available in the English language. Since also most of the sources were digital in nature, a thorough field research on the same subject accompanied by real life interviews with the insurgents and rebel factions in these civil wars would greatly help in making this research more authentic, which unfortunately is not the case here due to resource and access constraints.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, we can find a large pool of academic literature that focuses on the role of ideologies in civil war settings, however, not much research could be found on the mechanisms and factors that able this transition in civil wars leading to the acceptation of religious jihadist ideologies within insurgencies operating in civil war settings. Hence, an effort was made to support the research done in this thesis with the available literature. A further attempt can be made in the near future to complement this research with more literature as we progress further on this topic. Moreover, it was difficult to chart out the way to establish absolutely concrete factors that lead to jihadisation of insurgencies within civil wars owning to change perceptions of the human nature and the lack of tangible first-hand sources to determine such factors.

Another important thing to note here is indeed that since the Syrian civil war is an ongoing armed conflict, a thorough and exact listing of factors influencing the insurgencies to adopt a jihadi doctrine is difficult to achieve. The ground conditions in the Syrian war is ever evolving, and the facts and statements mentioned here may not be relevant for a long time. Thus, continuous research needs to be carried out in this field.

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F. List of Appendices
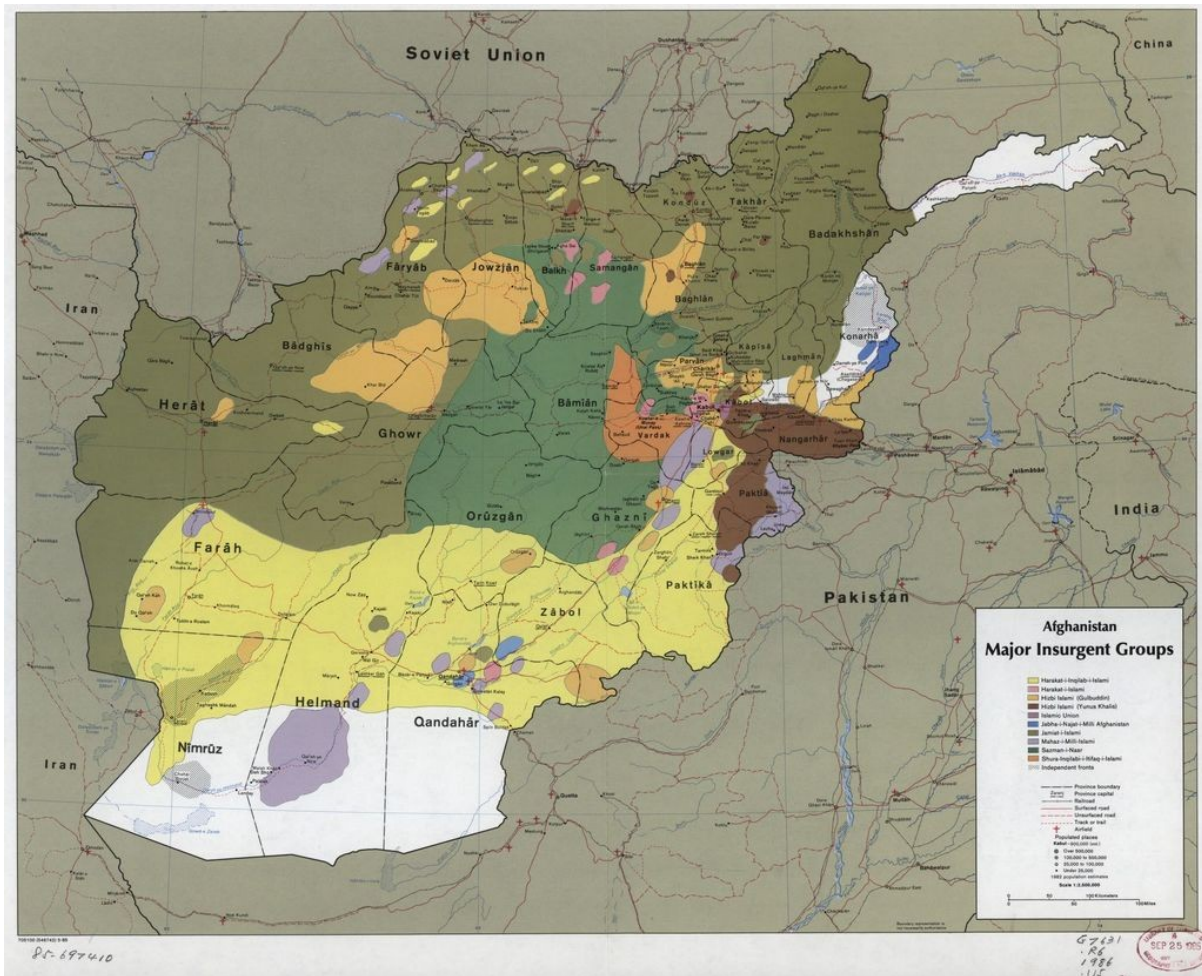
Appendix 1: Major insurgency groups present in Afghanistan and areas controlled by them (Map)

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, USA